

Sri Ramanuja's Philosophy and Religion

A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF
VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA

By

Dr. P. B. VIDYARTHI, M.A., Ph.D.,

Professor of Philosophy, University of Ranchi, Ranchi.

Prof. M. RANGACHARYA MEMORIAL TRUST
TRIPLICANE, MADRAS-5

Price : Rs. 45/-

FOREWORD

I have read with great pleasure and edification Dr. P. B. Vidyarthi's surprisingly remarkable book on *Śrī Rāmānuja's Philosophy and Religion* comprising lectures which he delivered at Madras under the auspices of Professor M. Rangacharya Memorial Trust. The book is a scholarly exposition of the fundamental principles of Vedānta as interpreted by Rāmānuja, the great exponent of Indian theism.

Vedānta is the culmination of the Indian philosophical and religious thought, but its interpretations which have been varied and ambiguous have proliferated difficulties in understanding the genius and spirit of Hinduism. Judging Indian religious thought in historical perspective, it cannot perhaps be gainsaid that, viewed in the light of the commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras* written by Śaṅkara and his followers who were themselves deeply affected by Buddhist thought, it was taken for a very long period of India's religious history to be pessimistic and other-worldly and as permeated with a negative approach to all the problems of life.

This book is a happy combination of lucidity of expression and profundity of thought and a penetrating insight into the meaning of Sanskrit

philosophical texts, on the basis of which the author argues that in them it is the theism of the highest type that is taught. If in the *Upaniṣads*, that is to say, there are a good number of texts which teach the doctrine of *Brahman* as a Self-manifesting Reality endowed with both knowledge and will, it is extremely astonishing to find scholars holding the opinion that their focus is on abstract monism.

The author in the course of his exposition and presentation of the fundamental principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita has achieved admirable success in bridging the psychological barrier between the East and the West.

I have a feeling that this book can rank high amongst those which have been written with a view to bridging the gulf between the East and the West.

13—1—1977.

A. DHAN.

[DR ANUJ KUMAR DHAN, M A. (PAT), Ph.D. (EDIN),
Vice-Chancellor of Patna University.]

PREFACE

This book is a much revised and expanded version of lectures delivered by me on the religion and philosophy of Viṣiṣṭādvaita in July 1972 at Madras under the auspices of the Professor M. Rangacharya Memorial Trust. I was obliged to enlarge considerably and revise the lectures for the following three reasons. (And this took sometime on account of my academic pre-occupations.)

In the first place, there are unavoidable disabilities attaching to the oral delivery of lectures. It is not possible to present an exposition of a difficult subject like this in a systematic form with all the rigours of airtight reasoning, which is recognised as an unquestionable virtue in a philosophical discourse. The lectures were delivered in a manner that rendered them easily intelligible to such members of the audience as were not familiar with the relevant philosophical texts as well as the traditional wisdom enshrined in them, though there were among them some distinguished scholars and many who were knowledgeable. However, the lecturer in such gatherings is concerned more with communication and the lucidity of his exposition than with any consideration or regard for profound scholarship and skill and insight into the traditional wisdom.

In the second place, the time allowed for the delivery of such lectures leaves hardly any scope for scholarly treatment of the subject. In this case, the entire subject was covered by four lectures. Hence it is by way of expressing my profound sense of gratitude and respect to the auditors who honoured me by listening to my lectures with pindrop silence and careful attention that I am presenting this book in a much revised form for the benefit of the larger public for serving in a better way the cause of the vindication of the much misunderstood credentials of Viṣiṣṭādvaita *Vedānta*.

Thirdly, since I felt that there was no yawning gulf between reason and revelation, the texts of the scriptures might be interpreted in a manner compatible with the principles of Natural Theology. It is one and the same reason that is

operative in both these spheres and there is, I think, no obstacle to our thinking that the book of Nature is also the book of God. There is the imperious necessity of understanding the philosophical and religious texts of Hinduism on the lines of Natural Theology so that the ideas locked up in them may be rendered intelligible to the modern mind.

I have, therefore, considered it desirable to expand the argument developed in the traditional literature of Viśiṣṭādvaita and explain it in terms of the language and idiom of nations and races other than our own. It is for this purpose that I have adopted in the course of these lectures the method of comparative philosophy in recognition of the fact that it is only by taking recourse to the method based on Western philosophical terminology that the depths and heights of Indian religious thought can be rendered intelligible to the scholarly world.

There is no doubt that the human mind, whether in the East or in the West, gives unimpeachable evidence of a uniform pattern of thinking in the spheres of the fundamental concepts and ideals of human life. The history of the evolution of religious and philosophical thought, East and West, bears eloquent testimony to the cultural unity of mankind. The differences are only on the surface, but it is tragic that they have been allowed to stand as insurmountable psychological barriers between the East and the West. I have made an attempt in these lectures to explain the principles of Indian theism as illustrated in Viśiṣṭādvaita by comparing them with those of Western theism with a view to bring them closer to each other.

There is a widespread belief in the West that in India there is no such thing as religion in the sense of the consciousness of a personal God with whom personal relationships can be established. Sir Charles Eliot, the celebrated author of the three volumes on *Hinduism and Buddhism*, maintains that the Indian attitude to life is fundamentally pantheistic rather than theistic. Belief in the existence of God who is personal, in the freedom and independence of the reality of the individual and in the reality of the world is fundamental to the Western view of religion. The Indian mentality, Eliot alleges, is basically pantheistic, stimulative of a corresponding indifferent attitude

to social values. Action in the world turns out to be purposeless if the world is acknowledged to be false. Those who study Indian thought and culture, consider non-theistic monism to be the very heart and centre of Indian religious philosophy, whereas it is well known to us that most of the schools of *Vedānta* have risen in revolt against the principles enunciated in the doctrine of Impersonal Absolutism. Since it is only by interpreting and expounding the principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita that the large-scale misconception of the genius of Indian religious thought can be wiped out, I have dealt with the philosophical and religious thought of Śrī Rāmānuja with a view to meeting squarely these challenges to Hindu thought and culture.

The first three chapters are an attempt at the elaboration of the principles of theism and of the need of the philosophical scrutiny and assessment of the pronouncements of religion.

The remaining chapters are the outcome of the application of these principles to the philosophical and religious texts of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. I have taken the view that there is no reason for the widespread misconception that the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* are radically opposed to those of the *Gītā* and that while the former support Impersonal Absolutism and pantheism, the latter is indisputably in favour of theism. The object of the penultimate chapter is to establish the truth of the contention that the demands of the religious consciousness can be met only by God who is perfect and absolute. There is, as a matter of fact, no inherent contradiction between philosophy and religion, because both seek to explain the universe in terms of the ultimate principle that is a self-contained centre of intelligence and will whose nature must be conceived by us by taking into account both the world and the human experience of which it is the principal and must consequently be the absolute value. But God in Śaṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādevaprakāśi is, indeed, not the absolute value to whom adoration and worship can be addressed. It is to the singular credit of Śrī Rāmānuja that he reconciled the claims of the religious consciousness with the demands of theoretical consistency and coherence.

I take this opportunity to express my profound sense of gratitude to Professor M. R. Sampatkumaran who honoured me by inviting me to deliver these lectures, and who has also been kind enough to publish this book. I am no less indebted to Professor S. S. Raghavachar of Mysore University who recommended me to this lectureship.

I cannot omit mentioning that the lectures were presided over by distinguished intellectuals who could be both critical and appreciative. They were inaugurated by Dr. V Raghavan, whose name is well known as a versatile Sanskrit scholar. Professor R. Ramanujachariar, formerly of the Annamalai University and an authority on Viśiṣṭādvaita, presided on the second day. Principal A. N. Parasuram whose interest covers English literature, Sanskrit poetry, Indian philosophy and the fine arts took the chair on the third day. Sri R. Gopālaswamy Iyengar, a leading advocate, presided on the concluding day and surprised me with his fluent and lucid exposition of philosophical intricacies. My thanks are due to all of them who presided over the lectures primarily to honour the memory of Professor M. Rangacharya, a scholar of unequalled eminence in his days, his versatile interests covering science, Sanskrit and philosophy,—but who also conferred distinction on the lectures when they were delivered. Sri M. A. Srinivasan, another well-known advocate who looked after many of the arrangements for the lectures and proposed a warm vote of thanks to the chairmen of the four meetings and to me, has unfortunately passed away before seeing my work in print.

My other obligations are many and obvious, but I am particularly indebted to Dr. Anuj Kumar Dhan, M.A. (Pat), Ph.D. (Edin), Vice-Chancellor of Patna University, for the pains he has taken in reading my book from start to finish and for favouring me with his Foreword.

I wish to thank Dr. R. S. Srivastava, M.A., D. Litt., University Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Ranchi University, who always pressed upon me to publish these lectures. My thanks are also due to Sri Har Nagendra Singh, the Librarian of Ranchi University Library, for his keen interest in the early publication of this book.

I am no less indebted to Sri M. C. Krishnan who has taken pains to get the book through the press.

25th September 1977.

PANDEYA BRAHMESWAR VIDYARTHI
*Professor of Philosophy,
Ranchi University.*

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Four lectures on "The Religion and Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita" by Professor P. B. Vidyarthi of Ranchi University were delivered under the auspices of Professor M. Rangacharya Memorial Trust from the 20th to the 23rd July 1972. The revision of the lectures for being printed and the necessary time required for printing carefully a book of this bulk accounts for the delay of five years in publishing them.

I first came into touch with Professor Vidyarthi when he wrote to me many years a letter asking whether copies of Professor M. Rangacharya's work, *Lectures on the 'Bhagavadgītā'* were available. I must confess that I had forgotten all about this when in 1971 Professor S. S. Raghavachar of Mysore suggested that I should invite Professor Vidyarthi for delivering the next series of Memorial Lectures. An invitation was conveyed to him on behalf of the Trust, but he found it possible to deliver the lectures only in July, 1972. In their expanded form, they are now published as *Śrī Rāmaṇuja's Philosophy and Religion*.

The scope of this work and its approach to the subject have been succinctly explained in Professor Vidyarthi's Preface. The last chapter of the work also ~~sounds~~ sums up the discussion, the conclusions drawn and the hope that it may prove of some little service in bringing the East and the West together in a mutual appreciation of the parallels and contrasts in their philosophies and religions. Curiously enough, this hope of Professor Vidyarthi was among the professed objectives of Professor M. Rangacharya's exposition of the *Bhagavadgītā* in a series of 87 lectures in the opening decade of this century. In his Preface, he points out the need to make "an earnest endeavour to bring together and harmonise by means of suitable and

accurate exposition the old thought of the East with the new thought of the West so that they may as early as possible be fused into one wisdom." He adds: "The possibility of accomplishing a thing like this need not be questioned, because the ultimate oneness of truth demands that all its many aspects should be consistent with one another. These lectures on the *Bhagavadgītā* have been intended to serve as a humble contribution towards the fulfilment of this high purpose of thought-harmonisation..."

That this purpose was amply fulfilled is borne out by the continued popularity of the lectures in book form and the tributes it has evoked both in India and abroad. The late Dr. F. W. Thomas wrote that it reminded him of the *bhāṣyas* of the famous commentators. Prof. S. S. Raghavachar in the Preface to his *Ramanuja on the Upaniṣads* describes him as "a Guru in his generation by the manysidedness of his academic attainments, his outstanding qualities as professor and his devoted and most competent contributions to the advancement of learning. He represented the highest qualities of intellect and moral and spiritual fervour. His contemporaries, eminent in their own fields, bear abundant witness to his eminence in their writings to his personality, to his moral stature, dignity of bearing, inestimable qualities of the heart and the range and depth of knowledge".

This is a digression by the way and I must be pardoned about writing at such length about my father. It is only by way of pointing out that Professor Vidyarthi has sought to serve one of the ideals dear to the heart of Professor Rangacharya in whose honour these lectures on Viśiṣṭādvaita were delivered.

In the concluding lecture, Professor Vidyarthi had briefly touched on Viśiṣṭādvaita in relation to contemporary philosophical trends in the West. This work the learned Professor has reserved for a subsequent book. However, in the course of this

study of Śrī Ramanuja's philosophy and religion, the attempt throughout has been to restate it in terms of modern thought.

Since religious experience is interpreted in many ways, its philosophical evaluation falls into many patterns. Even when religion is relegated to a minor position, the attitude to society, morality and the universe takes many forms. In the circumstances, philosophy tends to be argumentative and polemical, and bigotry, animosities and wars have marred the history of religion. Tolerance however has marked the Indian attitude to religion, and this has resulted in keeping bigotry and fanaticism within bounds.

All this is said in order to explain the inevitable criticisms of many philosophical systems and attitudes made in the course of this work. Particularly, there has been an old, unresolved conflict between realism and idealism both in the West and India. Here it is represented by the fundamental division between *Advaita* and the schools of thought opposed to it. Śrī Rāmānuja wrote his works in a context which necessitated not merely the exposition of the tradition he represented but also the refutation or criticism of *Advaita*. In the West also, the battle between idealism and realism is still raging and Christian theology seems to be involved in a critical re-evaluation of many fundamental concepts and dogmas. All this is reflected in Professor Vidyarthi's work who has taken special pains to show that *Advaita* is only one of the many schools of Indian philosophy and not its only representative. The well-known understanding in India about philosophical polemics is that they are intended to fortify the position of the critic and not to devalue completely the other schools criticised. This is the well known *na hi nindyā nyāya*, the maxim that states that no abuse is intended. It seems to me that Professor Vidyarthi's arguments are bound to be viewed by philosophers as persuasive according to this Indian tradition, though I am no expert in the field. He has performed a valuable service to Śrī Rāmānuja's

thought, which has long been waiting to be done, that is, restating it so as to suit the contemporary cultural background.

Incidentally I may be permitted to mention that modern scholars and traditional pandits working together have to expend considerable effort on bringing out standard critical editions of important texts and their translations in English and other foreign and Indian languages ; on piecing out the history of Viśiṣṭādvaita from the *Upaniṣads* through the *Gītā*, the *Brahma-sūtras*, Bodhayana, Dramida, Tāṇka and others down to Nāthamuni, Yāmuna and Rāmānuja ; on bringing out clearly the influence of the hymns of the Āzhvārs on the great preceptors ; on the developments in Viśiṣṭādvaita after Rāmānuja in the works of Lokācārya, Vedānta Deśika, Varavaramuni and the great commentators on the Āzhvārs, and the creative application of *Navya Nyāya* to the dialectics of the school even in the 19th century ; and on the influence of philosophy on practical and moral life, religious practices like prayer, meditation, domestic worship and temple worship.

By way of doing some humble service in this direction, the Trust has brought out an English translation of Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Gītā*, a pioneering survey of all the works of Yāmuna and a study of Rāmānuja's elucidation of *Upaniṣads*. It hopes to start presently the printing of Dr. V Varadacharya's comprehensive work, *Āgamas and South Indian Vaiṣṇavism*. A brief study of Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi* in English may be then published.

It remains for me to thank the distinguished chairmen of the lectures on the various days—Dr. V. Raghavan, Principal Parasuram, Professor R. Ramanujacharya and Sri R. Gopalaswamy Iyengar—who were kind enough to accept my request to preside over Professor Vidyarthi's lectures. Dr. V. Raghavan has been taking a very keen interest in the activities of the Trust, and this time also he inaugurated the series. I particularly feel the loss

of Sri M. A. Srinivasan who had been helping me in innumerable ways. The Triplicane Cultural Academy associated itself with the lectures and helped us in making the arrangements. The authorities of Sri Yadugiri Yatiraja Mutt, Triplicane, Madras, kindly allowed us to use their hall for the lectures. Sri M. C. Krishnan was responsible for seeing that the printing was carefully carried out. Sri R. Srinivasaraghavan prepared the indexes and the errata. To all of them the Trust expresses its thanks.

30th September 1977.

M. R. SAMPATKUMARAN,

CONTENTS

PAGES

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION ... 1-66

Unity in Forms of Knowledge and in Analysis and Synthesis—Philosophy as Quest for Final Unity—Thinking Things together—Pluralism in Contemporary Philosophy—Emphasis on Organic Unity—Mathematics & Science vs. Unified View of Reality—Scientific Abstractions & Values—Religious Experience in Human Knowledge—Its Assessment—Its Autonomy—Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion attacked—Transcendental Principle in Knowledge—Educational Role of Philosophy.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF RELIGION ... 67-119

Religion vs. Secularism—Religion & Transcendent Element in Experience—God & Definition of Religion—Common Element—Theism the Perfect Form of Religion—Religion without God?—Religious Reality Transhuman & Personal—Reason & Religion—Religion, Action & Feeling—Will & Belief—*Bhakti* as the Religious Attitude.

CHAPTER III

ONTOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA ... 120-172

Viśiṣṭādvaita & Natural Theology—Subject & Object—Finite Mind to God—God to Finite Mind—*Advaita* and *Viśiṣṭādvaita*—A Philosophy of Proportion & Affirmation.

CHAPTER IV

THE IDEA OF GOD IN VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA ... 173-247

The Existence of God—Science & God—The Highest Unity—Ultimate Reality as Self-revealing and Self-determining—Value & Existence—Personality—*Sāmānādhikarānya*—Relation—Ultimate Reality as Concrete Identity,

CHAPTER V

VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA IDEA OF GOD IN UPANISADS ... 248-360

Authority, Reason & Experience—*Upanisads* as Pantheistic—Theistic Interpretation—Ultimate Reality—Radhakrishnan's Theistic Emphasis—*Chāndogya*—*Bṛhadāraṇyaka*—Theism in Later *Upanisads*—*Muṇḍaka*—*Katha*—*Praśna*—*Śvetāśvatara*—Reconstruction of Religious Thought in *Upanisads*.

CHAPTER VI

VIŚIṢṬĀDVAITA IDEA OF GOD IN THE

BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

... 361-451

An Enquiry into the Problem of Conduct—Monistic Interpretation—*Nivṛtti*—*Nivṛtti* vs. *Karma-yoga*—Ethics & Metaphysics—The Highest Good—The Empirical & Transcendental Self—Psychology of Moral Action—*Gītā* Metaphysics—Freedom & Grace—Knowledge, Action & Devotion—*Adhyātma* to *Brahma-vidyā*.

CHAPTER VII

THE STATUS OF GOD IN SAṆKARA,

BHĀSKARA AND YĀDAVAPRAKĀŚA ... 452-519

Protests Against *Advaita*—Personal God & Religion—Pre-Saṅkarite *Vedānta*—God as victim of *Avidyā*—Bhāskara's *Bhedābheda*—Yādavaprakāśa's *Bhedābheda*—Buddhism & *Advaita*—Saṅkara & Rāmānuja on Morality & Religion—Theistic Orientation of *Vedānta*—Hinduism and the West.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION ... 520-567

Subject Index ... 568-576

Index of Sanskrit Works Quoted ... 577-579

Index of Names ... 580-583

Index of English Quotations: Authors and their Works ... 584-589

Transliteration ... 589

Bibliography ... 590-591

Errata ... 592

श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः

SRI RAMANUJA'S PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

—:0:—

A CRITICAL EXPOSITION OF VISISTĀDVAITA

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

1. Presence of Unity in all the Forms of Knowledge :

Philosophy, whatever view about the nature of its content and function we may hold, has one and only one task before it, namely, to give a connected view of human experience, divided into different compartments by us for our convenience for the sole purpose of understanding the nature of the whole. In fact, it is not with the isolated bits of experience, nor with the atomic particles of objects in space and time that we have to start our enquiry. Man is the centre of the whole universe, and it is from where he stands that he judges and makes an estimate of all things around him from the standpoint of the enduring satisfaction of the multiple sides of his being. Unity is the truth of this being, and because he finds in the universe outside him evidence of unity and order, it is intelligible to him.

It is not facts separated from one another that constitute truth; but it is rather their abiding harmony and inter-related consistency and coherence that yield to man's intelligence. The

many are but the expressions of the one. The One in man knows the world by which he is confronted, because basically it is one and the same spirit of unity that permeates and pervades both of them. In any form of thinking, one has to start with the evident fact of unity. We know things as wholes, centres of unity, and not as unrelated, isolated facts. This fundamental fact of unity is manifest to us not only in the theoretical forms of our knowledge and understanding, but also in the practical forms of aesthetic feeling and appreciation and in the experience of love and joy in our usual confrontation with the objects of the apparently divided world ruled by the inexorable laws of space and time.

Philosophy alone is competent to give a systematic and connected view of all things; and it cannot be gainsaid that the branch of knowledge seeking the inner chord of unity in all things is not merely a matter of intellectual pastime or of mere academic curiosity, but is something forced on the rational nature of man. It is reason in man that confers on him the supreme prerogative of his authority over all things. It is fundamentally the faculty of unity characteristic of the human understanding and interpretation of things. It is reason, again, which enables man to evaluate and assess human conduct and pronounce judgments on its moral quality. Reason makes him the crown of the earth.

Man is a many-levelled being. The dialogue in the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* between Bhṛgu, the son, and Varuṇa, the father, bears eloquent testimony to the embodiment of the entire cosmos in man. It tells us how all cosmic principles and levels of reality converge in man. The different fragments and segments into which we can divide the human personality and also the many levels of reality that are our objects of knowledge and constitute the subject-matter of sciences from physics to aesthetics and metaphysics are fundamentally and basically one. Reality is an integral whole and not a mechanical aggregate of different elements. The truth underlying man and the universe

philosophy, and commonsense is only as regards the conscious or unconscious awareness of those uniting principles. Science is pledged to the principle of unity in the universe outside or the world of space and time, while religion tries to get us to the inner thread of unity in the spirit of man and connects it with God immanent in the world. If reason expresses itself in the form of laws and principles of the world which science discovers, and if the world is intelligible only by human thought, intelligence or reason, how can we question the evident fact of unity at the root of both the world outside and as imbedded in human nature itself? "The laws of the inner psychic substance are of necessity themselves those of outside reality. And if you succeed in reading one properly, the chances are that you will find the confirmation and, if not, the presentiment of what you have read or will read in the other."³ Knowledge, whatever its form, is of the nature of an organism. The human enquiry starts with apparently unrelated facts, but is fully rewarded when it gets hold of higher and higher categories of explanation. Man finds himself constantly encountered by an all-encompassing mystery around him, and he cannot help asking questions regarding himself and his environment. Because he is a rational animal who must exercise his reason to understand and comprehend everything that surrounds him, and because in every moment of his existence he must learn from experience, he cannot rest content without asking if his life itself has meaning or not.

Man cannot live without passing judgment on things he comes across in his life and he alone, as contrasted with all other things and beings of the world, judges things as good or bad. He must ask if his life has any value or meaning. There are things in his life which he judges good, others which in his

3. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, p. 341, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1965.

estimation are evil and worth being abandoned. In wider contexts also, he must ask if he is of the same stuff of which the world outside him is made, or whether in his nature or constitution he radically differs from it. It is not possible for man to be happy and to live his life smoothly without raising such questions and seeking their answers and thus understanding the meaning and value of his life. Man cannot just pass by or overlook or cast aside such riddles of his existence. He cannot remain unaffected by such riddles, questions and problems.

III. Philosophy as the Ineradicable Quest for Final Unity :

Every man, therefore, so far as he is bound to raise such questions and ask the meaning of his life, is a philosopher and philosophizes at least in the most vacant, private and lonely moments of his life. The difference, therefore, between the ordinary unreflective individual and the professional philosopher as regards reflection and meditation upon the riddles of human existence is only one of degree; that is to say, it arises from the distinction between the unconscious and conscious, systematic and active exercise of reason. As A. E. Taylor puts it: "I cannot reconcile myself to the view that philosophy is a simple pastime for the curious, with the same attractiveness and the same remoteness from all the vital interests of humanity, as the solution of a highly ingenious chess problem. If philosophy were really that and no more, I confess I should have small heart for the devotion of life to such 'fooling'. I am content, with Plato and Kant, to be so much of a 'common fellow' as to feel that the serious questions for each of us are 'What ought I to do?' and 'What may I hope for?' and that it is the duty of philosophy to find answers to them, if she can. If none can be found, so much the worse for philosophy, but her incompetence is not to be assumed lightly." 4

4. *The Faith of a Moralist*, Series I, p. 37, Macmillan & Co., Ltd., London, 1930.

Man is distinguished from the rest of the sentient existence by his natural and spontaneous capacity for understanding his surroundings and himself. Sartre, the atheist existentialist, tells us in the language of the *Upaniṣads* that man alone is *pour soi*, for himself, in contrast to the things of the world which are *en-soi*, that is, which exist in themselves and cannot, therefore, understand the meaning of their existence. Schopenhauer has given such a lively and eloquent expression to this truth that we cannot resist the temptation to quote him in the following moving sentences of his :

“With the exception of man, no being wonders at its own existence”. “Only to the brute, which is without thought, do the world and life appear as a matter of course. To man, on the contrary, it is a problem whereunto even the coarsest and most narrow-minded becomes vividly alive in some brighter moments. It enters distinctly and permanently into the consciousness of each of us, in proportion as that consciousness is clear and considerate, and has, through culture, acquired food for thought. In those higher minds which are naturally fitted for philosophical investigation, it becomes the ‘wise wonder’ of which Plato spoke”. “For the great majority, who cannot apply themselves to thought, religion very well supplies the place of metaphysics.” “If anything in the world is worth wishing for—so well worth wishing for that even the coarse and stupid herd, in their more reflective moments, would prize it beyond gold and silver—it is that a ray of light should fall on the obscurity of our being and that we should gain some explanation of the riddle of existence.” “Temples and churches, pagodas and mosques, in all lands, at all times, bear testimony by their splendour and vastness to this metaphysical need of man.”⁵

5. *Die Welt als Wille and Vorstellung. Ergänzungen zum ersten Buch.*
Kap. 17.

PR—2

Everybody, therefore, in his day-to-day business takes up a certain attitude towards the objects of the world. He does not simply pass from one set of experiences to another without thinking of any connecting link between them, or without any purpose in his mind. The common man is, thus, all the time philosophizing, though he may not be conscious of it. In unconsciously passing from one experience to another, prompted by different purposes and setting up links between the different ranges of his cognitive activities, he is all the while expressing his inability to understand anything, unless presented to his mind in the perspective of a whole. The difference between the professional philosopher and the common man, therefore, consists only in this that while the philosophizing of the former is carried out in an unconscious, unsystematic way, the latter does it consciously and systematically, so that he can give a clear, systematic and consistent expression of his whole intellectual procedure.

The thinking of the common man is loose, while that of the academic philosopher is consistent, systematic and conscious. Further, the academic philosopher, like the scientist, but unlike the common man, abandons all his personal feelings and individual prejudices, and tries as far as he can to include as the object of his critical scrutiny whatever experience presents itself to him. The interest of the common man may be prompted by his needs and desires, and he may consequently abstract from the total mass of experience only so much as is necessary for his practical interests and requirements. The attitude of the common man is bound to be partial and abstract, while that of the academic philosopher is always general and total. It is no doubt true that the philosopher, in his pilgrimage for truth, has to take the help of abstract concepts. But such a course on his part is only subsidiary to the prospect of attaining to a total and integral view of experience and reality. He is convinced that it is only from the experience given as a whole that he can build up his conception of Reality. Without thus looking at the

world in this way, it is not possible for him to understand its value, meaning and significance for man.

Philosophy is the rationalization of experience. It is a strenuous attempt at discovering the general principles and concepts implicit in our experience in all its forms and dimensions. It is experience in its totality that forms the subject-matter of philosophy. The world of experience for the philosopher is not a mere amorphous aggregate of particulars. It is not reasonable to hold that the truth about the world presented to our experience is that it is a mass of particulars and that there is no order or system in it. Were it so, it would not have yielded its secrets to the human intelligence. Philosophy, therefore, starts with the assumption that the world is a coherent system and that consequently there are laws, concepts and categories in terms of which its nature and character can be disclosed to us. The more we try to understand and interpret it and thus penetrate into it, the more enriched it becomes to us. That is why philosophy has been taken to be the most concrete attitude of the mind towards the world.

VI. Philosophy as Thinking things together :

Plato, in his *Republic*, says : "He who sees things together is the true dialectician" or the "true philosopher", which means that philosophy is the synoptic view of human experience. A philosopher, it is said, is the "spectator of all time and all existence". The human mind is a unified whole and, therefore, it can penetrate into the depths of things only when they are revealed in all their transparency. This synoptic view of the world is indispensable and is not the result of arbitrary thinking or empty imagination on the part of the human mind. We all have beliefs concerning the world and of our experience, and these profoundly affect our feelings and conduct and our whole attitude.

As man finds himself in the world and is hedged in by an endless stream of objects, he cannot resist the temptation, nay, the impulse, the itch, to ask what its real nature is of which he forms part. Science proposes answers to it; but in so far as its analysis of the world is in terms of abstract laws and of facts, in themselves, it cannot give a complete solution of the puzzles that confront man. Mere analysis of the world into its laws and facts cannot silence the eternal cry of man, but only that which can tell him emphatically and triumphantly what it is that constitutes the meaning and destiny of his life. It is philosophy alone, as distinguished from science, that can furnish answers to these eternal problems of man. What distinguishes science from philosophy, therefore, is not that both are concerned with quite different data or materials of experience. In fact, the data and materials of experience are one and the same in both spheres. What, however, marks the former from the latter is that in the former our concern is with the laws and the positive nature of them, which, of course, are abstracted by it from the total mass of experience, and are studied, and interpreted by the selves: in the latter, their connection with the whole experience which had been severed, for the time being, from it and from the cognitive life of man, is again restored, and the philosopher begins to look at it in the light of the meaning and value it may have for human life in its completeness. As man himself is a whole, and as both the world that confronts man and human experience itself take "all sorts" to make them what they are, we cannot escape from a synoptic, total, integrated view of the world of human experience. There is nothing in the world and human experience, that can be understood by itself. Science would cease to be pursued if the objective truth it seeks had no bearing on human life.

The materials or the data which the philosopher handles are not spun out of his own imagination. They are, as a matter of fact, the same facts with which commonsense, science, history and art deal. Facts are there already

waiting for the philosopher to be raised above the level of mere immediacy. Experience in all its ranges and with all its complexity, is the raw material alike for philosophy, science, history, morality, art and religion. Philosophy is bound, therefore, to bring on itself the charge of empty abstraction, if it withdraws itself from the profoundest and deepest concerns of life. Philosophy is primarily a formal or interpretative undertaking and it is no concern of it to give us God, freedom and immortality. Experience in all its richness and diversity is already given, and philosophy by operating upon it only draws out its implications and works out their mutual relationships and thus by bringing them under one rubric or system, adds new meaning to it.

It is a completely mistaken view of philosophy, therefore, to hold that it is nothing but logic-chopping and that the philosopher confined in a dark cellar is all the while looking for a dark cat which is not there. As Caird put it: "The philosophical way of presenting things is not a capricious effort, for once in a way, to walk upon one's head, as a change from the ordinary method of walking on one's feet—or to escape the monotony of one's ordinary face by painting it; but it is because the manner of science does not finally satisfy the intelligence that we are obliged to go beyond it."⁶

Ordinary consciousness is not troubled by the principles that underlie the facts. The uncritical, unreflective man is not concerned to examine its nature, unless and until he meets with difficulties in carrying out his daily, routine business. The ordinary popular consciousness, in its contact with the objects of the world, does not care to know or understand the conditions of its knowledge of them, nor does it ever analyze the principles underlying it. Thus, even though the scientific or

6. Caird, *Hegel*, p. 196.

a philosophic interpretation and understanding of facts does make it clear how such categories of thought as substance, causality etc. are involved in our knowledge of things, the common man goes on with his daily routine work, seemingly unaffected by how they form the structure of the very language he makes use of.

However little he may reflect on them, unless these are presupposed by him, he cannot get on well with his experience. Philosophy does nothing more than render our awareness of things and of our experience of them more clear than ever before. Unless the wide sweep of experience in all its forms is thus subjected to critical interpretation, we cannot understand experience itself in its entirety and with its many-sided bearing on human life. The analysis of our common experience with a view to disclosing its most general principles implicit in it is not a matter of mere idle curiosity, but throws immense light on all the practical interests of man. All the spheres of human thought and activity—art, law, morality and religion—presuppose these general principles and, in the absence of the knowledge of them, we cannot understand what their bearing is on human life and how they can serve human interests.

Philosophy, thus, is the interpretation and understanding of human experience in all its complexity and variety. But what is experience? The term, 'experience', requires some clarification in order that we may know what philosophy means when it is said that it is the interpretation of human experience in all its variety, complexity and richness. Now, it should be clear that experience means direct confrontation with the object given us in presentation. Thus, I may be said to experience the beauty of a rose when I am in direct contact with it through my eyes. But in the second place, not only does it consist simply of direct contact with an object given in presentation, but it points also to the mode or manner in which the consciousness of the object functions. Experience thus connotes both

the direct contact with the object and also the mode of consciousness of the object. Thus, it is no less our own knowledge of our pleasures and pains, the modes of our consciousness, than merely the perception of the objects that can be said to form part of the meaning of the term "experience".

Experience, thus, as Kant so emphatically and systematically showed, refers not only to the perception of individual things involving organisation of the sense-manifold, but also to the judgments and propositions which express laws and principles that organize the perceived particulars into unity and system. Experience also refers to that range of knowledge which points to systems of facts, organised provinces, spheres of knowledge, such as religious experience, scientific experience, moral experience and so on. Philosophy, as an attempt to interpret experience as a whole, thus includes within its scope both the lowest and the highest forms of it without dissolving their richness and variety, and reducing them to a blank pattern of dull uniformity. For it cannot get away from the fact that the world of experience is hierarchical in nature with qualitative differences which are revealed to us when we pass from one range of facts to another.

It is perfectly intelligible how experience does not refer exclusively to the information we gather of outward objects through our direct contact with them by means of sense-object contact. What is important to note in this connection is that the "experience" has with it the association of the sense of directness, so that to experience an object, if we accept this meaning of the term, is to indicate that the cognition or apprehension of the object that we come to have is not an indirect or mediated one, but that our acquaintance with it has been directly secured by hearing, seeing or touching it and not by making inferences about it from marks perceived about it. Further, the effort directed to the understanding of the full implication and meaning of "experience" forbids us from

excluding such mental processes at work, even as the most rudimentary perceptual apprehensions, as those of abstraction and comparison on the one hand and, on the other, the resultant pleasant and painful experiences and their conative reactions characteristic of our attitude to them, both condition and follow upon our cognition of things.

V. Antimetaphysical & Pluralistic Tendencies in Contemporary Philosophy:

Unfortunately, in the last three centuries, starting from the empiricism championed by John Locke, with its servile obedience to the dictates and assumptions of natural science, holding its sway over the English mind, we have been progressively led to that view of knowledge giving rise to the school of logical positivism, which has stamped out as meaningless and absurd all such forms of experience as are exemplified in our moral, religious and aesthetic experiences. Experience has thus been dogmatically attenuated and narrowed down to connote nothing except that which can be verified by sense experience, while it cannot be disputed that what is characteristically human and what has promoted the values of civilization are precisely those ideals that are expressed in our moral, religious and aesthetic 'misinterpretation' of science itself, looked upon as empty of all meaning, significance and value.

While natural science in its most recent pronouncements on the nature and constitution of matter and energy has lapsed unavoidably into abstractions and has become symbolic in character, logical positivism and its offshoot, linguistic analysis, continue to remain imperviously entrenched in the hard shells of the old-fashioned scientific dogmatism and urge that nothing which is not verified by sensuous experience or which cannot at least be reduced to sensuous perception can have any meaning, that is to say, cannot be declared true or false, let alone claim any title to an honourable place in the economy of human

experience. While philosophy should by no means be confined and cabined within the narrow experience of the mere general principles and laws of science, empiricists have been continually eloquent that truth or falsity can be the property only of scientific propositions and not of those which express human experience in its most comprehensive and widest stretches, namely, our aesthetic, moral and religious experiences.

It is true that for a clear understanding of the whole of experience it needs to be broken into its constituent elements, and certainly the progress of science in all its branches is in no small measure due to the efficiency of the analytical method. If the data or materials of our knowledge were not capable of being analysed and divided into simpler elements and constituents, science would have been impossible. Knowledge or experience would have been extremely limited in range and scope. But science is itself the outcome of a vicious abstraction from the given concrete human experience and, due to the very limited interest it takes in the events and phenomena of the world, it cannot proceed any further without abstracting a great deal from them.

The value of abstraction in certain areas of knowledge in which we deal only with quantitative relations is unquestioned. In the lower levels of reality which belong to the inorganic forms of matter, and which exhibit objects as instances of mechanical unity and aggregates bound by external relations, the method of abstraction brings about results which are of enduring value to humanity. Knowledge in these provinces of human experience requires set formulae, definitions and clear-cut concepts, precision of details and accuracy of experimental results. Hence only abstraction in these spheres of human experience leads to expansion in knowledge. "The advantage of confining attention to a definite group of abstractions," says Whitehead, "is that you confine your thoughts to clear-cut definite things, with clear-cut definite relations. Accordingly, if you have a

logical head, you can deduce a variety of conclusions respecting the relationships between these abstract entities. Furthermore, if the abstractions are well-founded, that is to say, if they do not abstract from everything that is important in experience, the scientific thought which confines itself to these abstractions will arrive at a variety of important truths relating to our experience of nature.”⁷ In case of things which are mere mechanical aggregates or combinations of elements which are all externally related to one another, the method of analysis is useful and cannot be avoided : for we cannot know the function of the whole, unless we are able to grasp clearly what part each of the component fragments plays in the object. Without knowing the function of each of the parts, their relations to one another and how they act and react on one another, it is not possible to understand how the mechanism of the object works. In natural sciences our concern is with the attainment of knowledge only by the analytic method of dissecting the given object into its component parts. In arithmetic, geometry and so on, in which we deal with extension, number, quantity and the like, things cannot be studied without splitting them into their constituent elements. It is true that there are both mechanical causes and teleological causes and the method of analysis and dissection brings about expected results. It may be admitted that the application of this method is useful to a certain extent even in the province of teleological causes which are not dead and inert things, but living beings.

The scientist has to rise above the concrete details of things given in the immediacy of his experience and seek the principle which works in them all. In this process of seeking the laws governing them, he has to leave out of account everything that is not relevant to his object of interest. The geometrician, for instance, in order that he may deduce all the implications of a

7. *Science and the Modern World*, p. 58, Mentor edition.

triangle or a circle for a clear conception or definition, has to eliminate all properties and characteristics of it which do not follow from its essential character as a determination or a form or mode of empty space. The specialised nature of sciences makes this obligation on the part of the scientist unavoidable, because he has to concentrate his attention only on a limited area of knowledge, only on the facts, events and phenomena of a particular, specific kind. Lest his investigation of these should be distorted and misinterpreted, he has to keep himself off from their unnecessary details.

VI. Emphasis on Organic Unity in Contemporary Science and Philosophy :

The error, however, of thinking that the investigation of a thing or an object through analysis is complete has to be avoided, because things as they are given in our immediate experience, are, each one of them, 'wholes'; and even the process of analysis and dissection is taken up only with a view to arriving at definite conclusions as to how the 'whole' functions. It is the nature of the whole that prompts the inquiry. The method of analysis is of no use to us, if it proves itself to be of no assistance in revealing the nature of the 'whole'. It cannot by itself provide the full explanation and meaning of things, whether in the inorganic or the organic sectors of reality.

In a sense, all things are systematic wholes, and the understanding of their nature and function necessitates not only the process of their being reduced to parts of which they are constituted, but also by the process of synthesis the reconstitution of the whole on the basis of the knowledge attained of the component elements. Even while splitting the given object into its possible component parts, one has to start with the perceived unity of the whole as an organised form of existence. The differences have to be understood and explained in the

perspective of the whole. Unity can be the explanation of the whole, but not isolated differences. Let me refer to geometry again in illustration. In our attempt to understand what a triangle or a circle is, we have to start with the unity of the concept before we can deduce any conclusion. The acceptance of the concept or definition of the triangle or the circle is accompanied by the recognition of all the implications of it in terms of its distinctive features. The reality of the 'whole' is the starting point of the inquiry into its real nature and function, and cannot, therefore, be taken to be in collision with the analysis of the given object into its parts which doubtless is only a methodological procedure and cannot therefore be taken to pronounce any judgment on its essential character.

It is very often forgotten by the scientist or at least by those who are not able to understand the real nature of scientific inquiry that however much the object may be open to analysis and dissection into its constituent elements and parts, it is in reality a unity. Without the assumption of this unity as the essence and character of the given object, it is impossible to grasp its function and all the implications of the analytic method applied to its study, interpretation and investigation. We hear nowadays about the fashionable doctrine of logical atomism advanced by Lord Russell and what we call protocol propositions, both of which assume the reality of the abstract and isolated atomic facts. On the other hand, Whitehead warns us of what he calls the fallacy of '*simple location*' or '*misplaced concreteness*'. He has taught us how confusions arise from both '*simple location*' and '*misplaced concreteness*', which, though reputable concepts in the scientific method of interpretation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, have now become completely outmoded.

'To say that a bit of matter has *simple location* means that, in expressing its spatio-temporal relations, it is adequate to state that it is where it is, in a definite finite region of space, and

throughout a definite duration of time, apart from any essential reference of the relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and to other durations of time.' ⁸ Criticising this false conception of *simple location* true only for an outmoded scientific outlook, Whitehead emphatically claims that 'among the primary elements of nature as apprehended in our immediate experience, there is no element whatever which possesses this character of simple location.' ⁹ The atom which was once taken to exemplify and illustrate the concept of *simple location* and was supposed to be solid, has now become some sort of a solar system which consists of electrons revolving round a nucleus, which, once supposed to consist of a proton, is now found to have a complex structure. This means that the old mechanical conception of physical objects as closed and self-sufficient aggregates of combinations of atomic particles is now discredited even in physical science.

It is certainly a retrograde step in philosophy to formulate any point of view which in the name of the idolatry of science is really a caricature of it. In the present-day science, therefore, it is the organic conception of reality rather than the mechanistic that is respected and honoured. Whitehead is of opinion that 'the atom is transforming itself into an organism; and finally the evolution theory is nothing else than the analysis of the conditions for the formation and survival of various types of organisms'. ¹⁰ Hence: 'Science is taking on a new aspect which is neither purely physical, nor purely biological. It is becoming the study of organisms. Biology is the study of the larger organisms; whereas physics is the study of the smaller organisms' ¹¹

8. *Science and the Modern World*, p. 57.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

The progress of natural science in the last five decades is therefore a radical departure from the old mechanical concepts, the conception of isolated, abstract atomic particles, and from the finality and objectivity of a point of view which is fundamentally abstract. A purely analytic method which acquiesces in the finality of isolated, atomic, indivisible particles and justifies beliefs in things as mere mechanical aggregates of them is not by itself capable of explaining the complexities and intricacies of nature, the nature, constitution and function of things even in the field of natural science. And when this change in the scientific outlook of a self-sufficient, mechanistic standpoint becomes a recognizable influence in contemporary science, we cannot think that human experience can be divided into watertight compartments the quality and character of which can be judged, interpreted and grasped by a uniform method. It is one thing, taking into consideration the methodological utility of the analytic method, to isolate the component elements of a thing for understanding its function, and quite another, just for this reason, to hold that it is nothing but a mechanical aggregate. Similarly, it is one thing to isolate or abstract a certain part, fragment or segment of experience from the totality of human experience for the comprehension of a certain level or order of reality, and quite another to extend the validity of the method to another department of experience where the application of such a method can only work havoc. As there are different grades and levels of reality, to all of them one and the same method cannot apply.

The progress of science, therefore, in the last fifty years has led to two important conclusions: first, that in so far as even the physical objects are no longer to be taken to be mere mechanical aggregates, the universe, which consists of such objects, is a systematic, organic whole, so that thinking necessitates the concept of one universe, all differences and oppositions within it being reducible to system, order and law; and secondly, that science is only a matter of methodology and

a part of the concrete human experience which is presupposed by it and to which it has ultimately to return for the verification and confirmation of its conceptual constructions about its nature. At a time when science has itself surrendered its old atomic and mechanistic view of nature, the adoption of what Whitehead calls the concepts of *simple location* and *misplaced concreteness* cannot be the model and pattern of philosophical thinking.

Science, being a specialised study and interpretation of human experience, cannot adopt any ultimate attitude as regards its nature and essence. It is only philosophy that can adopt such an ultimate attitude towards the whole of experience, for it consists in *thinking things steadily and thinking them whole*. As there is no simple, isolated atomic fact, so also there is no department of experience which can be understood without its relation to other cognate and correlated apprehensions of reality. The fashionable doctrines of logical positivism and linguistic analysis which are heavily indebted to the metaphysics of logical atomism, are based on an utterly wrong view of the nature of science. Wittgenstein himself ultimately discarded logical atomism and, as G. J. Warnock has said, "The doctrine lay like a time bomb in the foundations of logical positivism."¹² "It seems plain and self-evident, yet it needs to be said: the isolated knowledge obtained by a group in a narrow field has in itself no value whatever, but only in its synthesis with all the rest of knowledge and only inasmuch as it really contributes in this synthesis something toward answering the demand.....who are we?"¹³

12. *English Philosophy since 1900*, pp. 41, Oxford University Press, 1958.

13. Erwin Schrodinger, *Science and Humanism*, Cambridge University Press, 1953.

The question of the ultimate nature of human experience as a whole cannot be cast aside; for reason, the organising spiritual principle in man, must always seek some ultimate category of explanation and interpretation in the light of which these partial formulations of science may be allowed their places in the system of human experience. Man cannot rest content with the abstractions of science and the conclusions at which sciences arrive in their respective specialised spheres of knowledge. He must ask what the nature of Reality must be, if the experiences of scientists in these partial formulations were true. It is a matter of life and death to civilization to consider the legitimacy of the view which looks upon science as ultimate with unquestioned competence to pronounce its judgment on human experience as a whole. "A civilization which cannot burst through its current abstractions is doomed to sterility after a very limited period of progress. An active school of philosophy is quite as important for the locomotion of ideas, as is an active school of railway engineers for the locomotion of fuel."¹⁴ Judged, therefore, by the concrete richness of human experience and the diversity of its contents, science, as Bradley says at the close of his metaphysical essay *Appearance and Reality*, 'is a poor thing.' In any synoptic view of Reality and Experience, science cannot be taken to be ultimate; for it cannot by itself constitute human civilization. We cannot discredit other areas of human experience just for the reason that they cannot fit into the framework of scientific thinking, imprisoned in hard shells of empty abstractions.

Science is selective because, for the advancement of knowledge, it has to abstract some aspect or sphere of reality provisionally, and isolate it from other provinces of knowledge and other aspects of it, so that concentration on what has been selected as subject-matter becomes possible and thorough

14. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 58.

investigation is ensured to arrive at definite conclusions. But the conclusions at which it thus arrives may be valid only within limited areas of restricted spheres of knowledge. They cannot be taken to be true of the whole field of knowledge.

Science, by the very nature of the case, is obliged to neglect and leave out of account a great variety of details and other features of reality which are not of immediate concern to it. These other features as well as other spheres of knowledge science has to discard as being irrelevant and accidental to a dispassionate study and interpretation of the object under study. All sciences or specialised studies of the objects of nature are only fragments of knowledge which cannot comprehend the whole compass of it. Within each limited sphere, it finds some organising principle or concept or category sufficient for the explanation of its subject-matter. It is this concept or category or organising principle or law which gives coherence, consistency and order to all its scattered bits of information. It is within that limited sphere of knowledge that these categories hold good. They cannot be extended to other spheres of knowledge which in range, complexity and variety may present us with many difficulties which cannot be overcome by categories which are simpler and lower.

VII. Mathematical and Scientific Revulsion against a Unified View of Reality:

Thus, in the nineteenth century and even earlier in the opening years of the seventeenth, when science was born and the intelligence of man began to penetrate into the secrets of nature, mathematics tended to simplify events and phenomena by abstracting them from the vast field of human knowledge. The process of abstraction was carried to the extent of declaring as real only such elements of human knowledge as were capable of being expressed in mathematical language and were thus quantifiable. As mathematics exercised a bewitching influence on the scientists and as its method of abstraction and simplification helped them to understand phenomena and events, they were encouraged to think that all secrets of reality could be unlocked with the same key.

It is true that the intelligence of man cannot be content, unless it discovers law, order and system in the capricious variety of things. Human reason cannot accept the finality of any view which tells us that there is no law, principle, or cause of things which appear before us. But to say that all things, events and phenomena have behind them some principle, law or cause working behind them is quite different from saying that there are different principles and causes for specific objects and things.

The fact that the world is called universe suggests that it is not irrational but governed by law, principle, or reason. From this, however, it does not follow that its contents or the objects of which it is a system are uniform in their nature. It requires all things to constitute the universe. In other words, the universe is hierarchical: in it we meet with qualitative differences as we rise from the lower to the higher levels of being. Quantitative formulations and divisions of things cannot override qualitative differences and distinctions.

The rise of science was greatly buttressed up by mathematics which, in the hands of Galileo and Descartes, reduced the world of concrete variety and richness to one of dull uniformity of quantitative relations, in which nothing could be called real which was not matter or motion. It cannot certainly be taken to be the final and absolute conclusion that the world of variety and richness, reduced provisionally by the method of mathematics to quantitative relations, is sheer illusion. After all, it is the avowed aim of science to explain just this world of concrete variety and richness; and no explanation can be said to be complete and adequate, if it forgets its end which prompts the very inquiry into the nature of the data with which the scientist is confronted. The true explanation of a thing consists not in tracing it back to its antecedent conditions, in abstracting them from their effects and in the tendency of natural science to ignore the difference of the antecedents from the effects. For

it is just this difference of the effects from their antecedent conditions and causes that the scientist is obliged to explain. The reduction of the complex effect to its simpler elements by diminishing the difference of the effect from them is not the true explanation. The true explanation of a thing consists rather in looking at both the antecedent conditions and their effect as constituting one whole process or unit. The true nature of the cause is revealed in the effect. There can therefore be no true explanation of anything by reducing it to its simpler elements and bringing us to dull uniformity. The qualitative difference of the effect from its antecedent causes and conditions, no true method of explanation can ignore.

It is certainly true that in limited areas or spheres, where the objects are of one order, the naturalistic method of the division of things into simpler elements may be helpful. For example, in mechanics, where our concern is with the laws of motion and with moving bodies, it is possible for us to understand and interpret the data by dividing them into their simpler elements. But when we pass from the phenomena of one order to those of another, for example, from the inorganic sphere to the organic one of life and sensations or from life and sensations to self-consciousness, this method works havoc, as we find from the work of philosophers and scientists from the third quarter of the nineteenth century onwards.

The fact, therefore, that the universe is hierarchical, that is to say, that there are qualitative differences between the different orders and levels of reality all of which cannot be reduced to the same pattern or law, and that the true explanation of phenomena is not their reduction to their simpler elements or antecedents or causes but has to be found in the purpose or the end which they serve, leads inevitably to the conclusion that science, if by this term we mean the analytic procedure or method of understanding things, by eliminating their qualitative differences, cannot be regarded as giving a true and complete

account of the entire range of human experience. As in this hierarchical world there are many qualitatively different orders or levels of reality, there must be different principles of explanations of them; and human experience consequently must be taken to be multi-dimensional. Matter, life and mind can each be studied analytically, but they are all united and harmonised in self-consciousness or in man. Therefore, it is not one single, absolute category or principle of explanation that can render the rich complexity and variety and diversity of human experience intelligible to us.

VIII. The Abstractions of Science and Value Experience :

Man has always believed that the world in which he finds himself is a rational and intelligible system. Hegel was right when he said that "the secret nature of the universe has no power in itself which could offer permanent resistance to the courage of science." The world is a cosmos, and it is the business of the intelligence of man to show how it is not a blind play of atoms, but is rational and exists for the realization of some purpose or end. While it may be acknowledged that our knowledge of material things may be accurate and exact, it cannot be disputed that their full implications become apparent only when we take note of the higher categories of life and mind and their relations to them. The exactness of conclusions in the sphere of material things may be fascinating and, as we ascend higher and higher in the scale of being, this exactness goes on progressively decreasing; yet we can never be satisfied with a view which holds that our moral and spiritual experiences remain a mystery to us, that higher levels of reality have nothing distinctive about them and that their only possible explanation for man is their reduction to their simplest elements

In fact, if it is one human experience which it is our duty to explain and understand, we have to admit that analysis and synthesis are equally important and complementary methods for

our comprehension of all the departments of knowledge. The part is not greater than the whole, and it cannot supersede it. The truth of the whole cannot be found in its parts. The validity of this conclusion becomes evident to us when, having analysed limited fragments of human experience, we come back eventually to experience itself, which once again presses upon us the finality of the complexity and variety of the complex whole from which sciences concentrating on their restricted fields of study are abstractions.

In attempting, therefore, to formulate a synoptic view of life and experience, we have to take a comprehensive view of it: for it is just its richness or variety that has to be explained. The difficulty of this problem becomes obvious, when in our constant and persistent endeavour to understand and achieve it, we pass from facts of one order to those of another order whose distinctive features and differences are such that they cannot be reduced to barren sameness. In the first flush of his researches, the scientist is prone to grasp higher categories of explanation in terms of the lower, so that the two are apt to be taken by him to be the expression of one and the same principle. The necessity of recognising new explanatory principles in our synoptic view of reality is pressed on us, because without this the facts in the higher regions of thought and knowledge will not be explained and made to find their place in the universe.

Philosophical knowledge, Hegel tells us, is the recognition of four fundamental forms or types of human experience, namely, the scientific, the moral, the aesthetic and the religious. The test of a good philosophy, therefore, is to be found in its attempt to comprehend the entire range of it by assigning to each one of these areas their legitimate place in the organism of human experience. "Man has nothing at all but experience; and everything he comes to, he comes to only through experience, through life itself. All his thinking, be it loose or scientific, common or transcendental, starts from experience and has

experience ultimately in view. Nothing has unconditional value and significance but life; all other thinking, conception, knowledge has value only in so far as in some way or other it refers to the fact of life, starts from it, and has in view a subsequent return to it."¹⁵

The synoptic view of Reality and human experience that it is the function of philosophy to furnish, cannot exclude large areas of human experience, just because they are not amenable to scientific treatment. Our most fundamental experiences are those which cannot be defined and set down in narrow limits. Science itself is part of, presupposes and is based on extra-scientific knowledge without which there can be no scientific knowledge. When the scientist conducts observations and experiments and puts forward the results of his researches about the facts of his study, he has, as their very basis and presuppositions, his own personal experiences of which the validity of his findings is quite independent. These experiences he has to take for granted and, without them, he cannot reach any valid conclusion. It is no less interesting to examine how he is able to know things than it is indispensable for him to examine conditions for the possibility of such knowledge; and it will then be possible for him to understand the true nature of both his scientific and non- or extra-scientific experience, which in a synoptic view of experience cannot be neglected. The philosopher addresses himself to the task of connecting together and thus giving a systematic and consistent view of all the areas and provinces of the total human experience. This necessity arises from the fact that all our experiences, the scientific, the moral, the aesthetic, and the religious, are human experiences and have their source and spring in man who, because of the presence of reason in him, cannot rest content with anything

15. Fichte, *Werke*, ii. 333, quoted in William Wallace. *The Logic of Hegel*, English translation, p. 264, Oxford University Press, London, 1959.

short of the unity binding together all the fragments of his experience. In the scale of being, man is highest; and human experience in all its specialised branches throws light both on human nature and on the nature of reality as a whole which expresses itself in them.

IX. The Place and Value of Religious Experience in Human Knowledge :

Philosophy, therefore, cannot exclude from the scope of its critical examination and evaluation such an important and universal phenomenon as religious experience, which has been and will continue to be the most dominant and absorbing preoccupation and passion of mankind the world over "In wandering over the earth you can find cities without walls, without science, without rulers, without palaces, without treasures, without money, without gymnasium or theatre, but a city without temples to the gods, without prayer, oaths and prophecy, such a city no mortal has yet seen, nor will ever see" Cicero says that there is "no nation so uncultured that it does not acknowledge some sort of deity, and belief in God is inborn in all men, engraved upon their souls as it were".¹⁶ Hegel tells us: "Religion, however, speaking generally, is the ultimate and the highest sphere of human consciousness, whether it be opinion, will, idea, ordinary knowledge, or philosophical knowledge. It is the absolute result—it is the region into which man passes over, as into the domain of absolute truth."¹⁷ "No man is so utterly ruined," he also observes, "so lost, and so bad, nor can we regard any one as being so wretched that he has

16. Quoted in Fulton J. Sheen, *Philosophy of Religion*, p 251, Browne and Nolan, Ltd., Longmans, Green & Co., 1952.

17. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. I, p. 54, E. T. by Spiers and Sanderson, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1962.

no religion whatever in him, even if it were only that he has the fear of it, or some yearning after it, or a feeling of hatred towards it. For even in this last case, he is inwardly occupied with it, and cannot free himself from it." 18 Edward Caird remarks: "A man's real religion, whatever he may profess, is the summed up product of all his experience, the ultimate attitude of thought and feeling and will into which he is thrown by his intercourse with the world. And though this attitude of mind is, in the main, due to the working of what we call unconscious reason, yet the whole nature of man as a rational being comes into play in producing it." 19

Just because, therefore, religion is one of the deepest and profoundest concerns of man in which he has sounded the whole gamut of his experience or consciousness, the rational and spiritual nature of man must concentrate all its intellectual powers with a view to understanding and evaluating the contribution it has made to the promotion and advancement of human civilization in the chequered history of mankind. Philosophy cannot be anything short of all-comprehensive, and the temptation to dictate one uniform method for the understanding and interpretation of the diverse data of human experience results ultimately in its impoverishment and extinction.

The concepts and categories of scientific experience are only symbolic constructions of our concrete experience which is extremely attenuated by science and stripped of its varied richness. After all, even scientific experience is relevant to the total experience, the intelligible explanation and interpretation of which is its pledge and responsibility. It begins with the ordinary world whose details and varied richness cannot be discounted by being reduced to empty abstractions. The

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.

19. *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, Vol. I, p. 40, James Maclehose & Sons, Glasgow, 1904.

scientist may argue that his concern is rather with these symbolic abstractions and not with the whole of experience. But if the process of abstraction is pursued to its utmost limits, all other elements which play their constitutive roles in the construction and constitution of parts of experience get progressively eliminated, with the consequence that we are left with nothing to understand and examine. That is the reason why the philosopher steps in where the scientist leaves off and tries to amend his procedure and teaches him that his method can be taken only to be partially valid. The conclusions at which the scientist arrives by its aid are provisional and not final, and cannot, therefore, be regarded as possessing the final and absolute authority for pronouncing judgements on the nature of the whole of the concrete human experience. We are not infrequently swept away by the misleading impression that the world of abstractions and symbols is the only world of any significance and importance. In fact, it is the bounden duty of philosophy to burst through these abstractions of science and to relate them to concrete human experience.

When we thus bear in our mind the relation of scientific experience to the rest of human experience, we cannot escape our responsibility to examine and assess the value and validity of religious experience. Just because the conscious intelligence of man in all its forms and dimensions manifests itself in all the forms and types of religion, and there is a continuous process involved in the refinement and deepening of the religious consciousness, and also because these spiritual activities exercise tremendous influence on the various departments of man's social and moral life, it is necessary that the subject of religion be submitted to a rational critical assessment and interpretation of it. Of all beings on earth, man alone is endowed with reason and intelligence which is the principle of unity involved in all his mental activities. The spiritual nature of man is by its very nature complex in character embracing numerous aspects demanding close attention and, unless reason is able to effect

harmony among all of them, there is no possibility of an integrated personality.

Of all the concerns of human life, religion is one which has characteristic features which are no less universal than they are extraordinary and unique. It has been the chief source of all man's inspiration and has inoculated him with burning enthusiasm and passion to the extent that even the sacrifice of his life is not a very heavy price that he is prepared to pay for its ideals. Religion adds meaning to what man approves or condemns. Religion is the only preoccupation that concentrates, impregnates and informs all his mental faculties and powers; it is that which impels him to exercise all the powers that he possesses. Nothing short of the whole man is its subject and the religious believer feels secure in his belief that cosmic powers are at his back, always supporting and inspiring him with courage and hope. In all his activities, he has the courage and strength to defy and conquer all obstacles and restraints in his way.

X. Necessity of Philosophical Assessment and Scrutiny of Religions Experience :

But as the history of religion both in the East and the West shows, it is double-edged sword. Religion has proved itself to be the strongest force both for its creative and destructive designs and has stood by the side of both reason and dogmatism. It is not always certain which way the wind blows. Looking at its creative function in the history of civilization, we can say that religion is the only interest of man's whole life that has both introduced harmony into the warring elements of his individual personal life and also into the collective life of nations, peoples and races. It has been the greatest cementing, integrating force in human life, as no other occupation of man can ever claim to be. It alone teaches him the worthlessness or utility of the values and ends of life that he seeks. But it has

been responsible also for the exhibition of man's most uncontrolled brutal passions and, in its name, most heinous, horrible and heartrending crimes have been committed. There can virtually be no end to wars that are fought in its name. It is said that the Christians were responsible for the First World War. In fact, war was resisted by the unbelievers, the socialists and the anti-Christians. The assassination of Jaures, who opposed war, was hailed by Christian believers. More often than not, it is atheists and secularists that have resisted any move for wars. There is no doubt that Christianity and Communism combine in the perpetration of an enormous number of crimes against mankind. The history of Christianity bears eloquent testimony to the fact that Christians have been mainly responsible for many acts of persecution and violence in the world.

There are very few religions in the world that can lay claim to immunity from religious persecution. Christianity promoted anti-semitism from the time when it became the religion of the Roman people. It is Christians who fought the religious crusades so frequent in Western Europe. Free thinking has always been condemned by Christian Fathers and believers. As Christianity, so also most religions, so far as their history shows, have been the source of an untold number of crimes against humanity. Slavery was defended by Christian Fathers. Religious persecution, in fact, was unknown in ancient history except among the Jews. Christianity made religious persecution more common.

But there is another side also to the matter. Religion has proved itself to be the most useful and effective source of human welfare. It supplies that to our secular ends and interests without which they can only be barren. Think of human civilization and culture without religion, without its profound influence on human activities. Indeed, without religion man can have no hope for his future. It is religion that makes man

uphold the cause of the good in life; and it is religion that makes him believe that what is good is also real.

Can we think of anything lofty and inspiring in human affairs without religion? Can the supremely real and good be only secular ends and interests? If so, how much will remain in addition to his secular goals which man can cherish? Is one entitled to believe that the world is not a cosmos if one has doubts that the world is not a system and is not the expression of intelligence and will? Can both the beliefs, that there is no rational order in the world and that it is rational through and through, hang together? Can there be morality as the pursuit of goodness for its own sake, if what we are constrained to believe to be real is nothing but prudence and selfishness? Why should we practise the good, if what is the Ultimate Good does not survive beyond the destruction of everything terrestrial? If there is nothing on which we can rest our hopes, nothing which is omnipotent and which no power on earth can resist, what meaning can our hopes and ambitions in life may be acknowledged to have? It is such a pessimistic picture of human life that is presented to us, if in reality there is nothing behind the world in which we live. If there is no spiritual principle immanent in the world, human life is bound to be but melancholy and gloomy. Religion alone adds meaning to all human affairs.

The paradoxical nature of religion which is exhibited in the wholesome influences it exercises in building up the texture of civilization, the cementing force which it claims as its inseparable possession, and also the most heinous crimes and brutalities that have been committed in its name, calls for a proper understanding of its nature. Religion, whether for its creative function or for the destructive role that it has played in the course of civilisation, cannot be left unexamined. As in secular matters, so also in religion, there are assumptions which need to be examined and understood from time to time in the larger perspective of the growing knowledge of the world. It is

one reason that is manifested both in the outside world and in the inner world of man, and there cannot be an unresolved conflict or hostility between them.

In all other departments of human life, enquiry is the indispensable condition of the advancement of knowledge and of effective practical purpose and progress. Before we are able to apply the principles of a particular sphere of knowledge to our practical interest, we need to examine its assumptions. There is never any discipline, branch or province of knowledge founded on unexamined assumptions. In all secular matters, we are always obliged to exercise our conscious intelligence with a view to knowing their nature and the conditions that makes them possible. We proceed with the assumption that to the human intelligence nothing can be unintelligible except that which is irrational. We cannot, therefore, make an exception in the case of the religious experience of mankind. The exercise of doubt in respect of the value and validity of religion rather adds to its dignity and utility and to the recognition of it as a recognisable force in the culture of man. As Kant says: "When religion seeks to shelter itself behind its sanctity, and law behind its majesty, they justly awaken suspicion against themselves, and lose all claim to the sincere respect which reason yields only to that which has been able to bear the test of its free and open scrutiny".²⁰

The questions and principles with which religion deals are ultimate in character. The principles are comprehensive and dominate the whole personality of man and pervade all the activities through which man gives expression to his attitude. It is religion more than anything else that determines the whole

20. Watson, *Selections from Kant*, p. 1, James Macintosh & Sons, Glasgow, 1908.

attitude of man to live and to the universe as a whole. In all such matters, the exercise of reason cannot be dispensed with, because it is with its assistance that we can mould the channels through which religion can work both for human welfare and for the complete evaporation of all ideals on which the fate of human civilization has rested so far.

There is also the question of the genuineness of religious experience. Religion is essentially a matter of inner life, the cultivation and culture of the inner spiritual powers and forces which are not capable of being placed on one's palms or analysed and dissected in the laboratory of the scientist. It is not what one can perceive with one's gross eyes, but essentially a subjective affair. Hence the commonplace scientific methods and standards explanatory of the ordinary objects, are not applicable to it.

There are many people who categorically deny the reality of such a thing as a religious experience. Its genuineness is due fundamentally to its subjectivity and its individual character. The outcome of religious experience and the generalisations and conclusions which spring from it are, first of all, born in the personal experience of the individual; and it takes some time for them to express their hidden secrets in various spheres of human thought and action. There are many people who do not accept the validity of anything which does not possess mathematical validity in the sense that it can be expressed in mathematical language or is measurable. Such an attitude or criterion of the reality and truth of things has dominated philosophy from the sixteenth century onwards, and up till now many people have surrendered their free thinking to dogmatic scepticism.

In such circumstances, it becomes necessary for us to examine if such an important aspect of human experience as religion can be unceremoniously brushed aside as being nothing

but fictitious and as referring to nothing beyond our own pious wishes and imagination. Who is there to assert the existence of any supreme reality outside our desires, wishes and emotions? Therefore, the very subjectivity of religion, the very fact that it is most individual and most personal calls for an enquiry into its nature, because it is possible that, just on account of its subjectivity, it is most universal. It is at least in this sphere that one could claim that the most individual and the most personal is the most universal. Therefore, reason which is the principle of unity in man and which seeks to organise all the spheres of human knowledge cannot allow us to exempt us from the responsibility of bestowing our cold, dispassionate thought on such a subject of supreme importance for man.

A dividing wall between the different departments of human activities and interest cannot be supposed to exist. As all our interests are related to one another, unless we are able to organise them, to co-ordinate and interrelate the different modes of our apprehensions of things, we will continue to drift aimlessly. If religious issues are not raised, man's life is bound to drift; because there is always in what man does, thinks and feels, the question of a certain standard of evaluation of what he thinks, feels and wills, of accepting and rejecting things by reference to their utility or harmfulness. How can one think of this standard of evaluation, of judging things in terms of high and low, good or bad, without having first looked into the question of religion? Religion, as has been indicated already, rests on what is considered to be ultimate both in reality and value. It is from the standard that it furnishes that we judge and act in the world and society in which we are placed.

It is of utmost significance, therefore, that we should enquire into its assumptions and postulates. In all our activities we always have before our eyes a certain criterion of reality and value. We cannot proceed even a step further, unless that to which our thoughts and actions are directed is

good and desirable. This is the underlying unquestionable assumption of all normal human activities. Nobody acts, except on the assumption that what he does is good, though afterwards when its nature is examined, he may find it to be based upon errors and wrong beliefs and hasty judgments. In order, therefore, that we may rule out all possibility of hesitancy in action and eliminate all doubts and uncertainties as to the truth and validity that religion claims, it is necessary for it to be subjected to reinterpretation and evaluation from time to time.

It is often said that religion may be expressed by affiliating it not necessarily to God, to life hereafter or to immortality, and that its dimensions may be restricted only to the creative possibilities of man. There are countless forms of religious experience, and it becomes necessary for us to examine which of them can claim the designation of religion in the true sense of the term. Religion is deprived nowadays of its supernatural elements and is brought down to the secular level and the creative possibilities of man, so that there is nothing beyond man and the world to which he can look up. We may ask what then can distinguish religion from morality. All these questions have presented themselves to us every now and then. Confusion in such matters is still increasing, due to the sophisticated thinking of modern theologians who have even gone to the length of announcing the death of God.

Can we consistently think of religion without God? Can it be reduced to purely human interests and dimensions? Can religion be understood exclusively in terms of secular ends? Such are the questions that confront men who are believers in the traditional point of view concerning the reality and value of religious experience. As these questions have assumed a certain prominence and importance in the confusion created by modern theology, our interpretation and evaluation of the functions of our beliefs is the urgent need of the hour, and it is by means of philosophy alone that our doubts can be resolved.

XI. Interrelations of Different Disciplines of Human Knowledge :

Religion is the most complex aspect of human nature, which is also shaped and moulded by many other conditions and circumstances of man's secular life. Progress in the different branches of science, the discovery of the laws of nature and the unfoldment of the hidden secrets of the natural phenomena continue to throw new light on it and transform our old opinions about the nature and constitution of the world. The religious man has the responsibility to coordinate his progress in all the fields of knowledge with his fundamental assumptions and beliefs which constitute for him the religious interpretation of reality and also determine his conduct and his relationship with his fellow-men.

This is the necessity for philosophical reflection upon religious beliefs. There is no doubt that they have always gone hand in hand, though the relationship between them may not have been rendered explicit. Indeed, it is difficult to say when religion began and when the reflection upon its nature came to exercise its influence upon the human mind. This must, however, be conceded that both religion and philosophy arise from the very rational nature of man ; and the question as to the measure in which reason comes to exercise its power on them is only a matter of degree. We can say that though reason is at work in both religion and philosophy, its function in the latter is more conscious than in the former. Man has been religious long before he became a philosopher. Philosophy is a conscious reflection on the central convictions of man as regards his nature, his place in the cosmos, his relationship with it and with the supreme power behind the universe. It is reason that makes man religious and it is reason that directs his attention to a particular object of worship and also lays down rules of worship or the manner in which he has to express his relationship with it. The whole activity is a rational one.

Unless the powers of thinking are active, he will never peep beyond his own narrow self. Unless, in other words, reason in him awakens his sleeping powers and brings them to bear upon his thinking about his surroundings and the conditions which determine him, man can never think of higher beings or a supernatural order different from himself. Therefore, it is reason that makes him transcend his own limited self and believe in powers that shape and control his destiny. Yet, the manner in which reason works in the beginning is not conscious. In the beginning, man's religion is not the result of his self-consciousness, the outcome of the conscious exercise of his thought. He has religion first, and then he subjects his religion to conscious critical reflection. It is clear man perceives, reasons and makes inferences long before he begins to examine what the laws of perception or inference are, what the conditions of perception are, or how valid inference is determined by certain laws. Similarly, man has many social organisations and institutions and a definite social order long before he bestows his thought on them with a view to acquiring knowledge of the rules and laws of their operation. Man has customs and rules long before he comes to think about the principles underlying them. Similarly, man is a religious being long before he seeks to understand and evaluate his religion, to examine if there is any reality behind it which is its ground and centre.

Religion, thus, in its origion, is simple faith, though this faith is not utterly and absolutely devoid of reason. Reason, however, is not always explicit, clear and conscious in the exercise of its functions. Even the beliefs which come to dominate his mind are products of reason, though they are not explicit, clear and conscious. Thus, we can say that religion, no less than philosophy, springs from the self-consciousness of man, though the manner in which the latter is at work must differ from it; and this is why philosophical reflection comes in afterwards to interpret and evaluate his religious beliefs.

XII. Philosophy cannot supersede Religion :

The philosophy of religion is not religion. Philosophy is rather religion brought to self-consciousness. Theology or the philosophy of religion is only a formal activity engaged in the conscious explanation, reflection and reinterpretation of its nature. When theology or philosophy is allowed to exercise its function upon religion, we must say that the latter has outgrown the stage of mere simple faith. Long after man has been able to determine his conduct by religion, he comes to realise the necessity of reordering intellectual and moral life by means of conscious reflection on it, believing that the more he tries to understand them by means of reason and discovers their rational functions, the more effective they are bound to be. Hence, religion in its early stages is more emotional and practical than reflective and conscious. It takes the form of rituals and a code of conduct rather than of a creed. Its beliefs are embodied in mythology rather than in logical propositions and judgments.

There is, in other words, in the beginning of its career, no attempt at a clear understanding of its nature. The necessity does not arise at all. Religion, that is to say, in this stage of its existence, is intuitive and practical, and does not try to understand the principles that underlie it. It does not take care to interpret and assess its relations with all other spheres of human activity. It is still crude and primitive with no desire to look into its credentials. But it is in the interest of religion itself that its functions and principles need to be explained, understood, reinterpreted and criticised from time to time. In the absence of critical reflection upon its nature and constitution, it can by no means be regarded as exercising any wholesome effect on human thought and conduct. The imaginative form in which it makes its appearance has to be replaced by rational exposition and vindication of its principles. There is always the necessity of understanding its nature, and this is never possible unless we are able to modify and moderate its imaginative character,

We must know what the object of our worship, veneration and adoration is. Mere blind, unquestioned faith in the object of worship cannot tell us why other objects also cannot deserve similar worship from us. Why do we worship some object rather than others? Why for instance we should kneel down with a contrite heart before the portrait of Jesus Christ rather than believe in magic and witchcraft, has to be examined because man is what the objects of his belief shape and determine him to be.²¹

A man's conduct and character is to a very considerable extent determined by the objects of his belief. A rational, conscious, reflective understanding of religion is therefore indispensable.

We do not say that human nature in all its complexity can be made transparently clear by the exercise of conscious intelligence and reflective thinking. It is too presumptuous to claim that there is nothing whatsoever in human nature that can escape critical reflection and rational understanding. There are ideals of reason, the ideal forms which reason constrains us to think our hopes and aspirations must take. That is to say, we dream of our social institutions taking an ideal, rational, consummate form. Reason is expected by us to manifest itself in its ideal forms in all our activities and beliefs. But this is only an ideal, and we cannot think of such a stage of human civilization ever being accomplished and consummated in the history of mankind. Yet we must not be depressed by the possibility of the recurrent failure of our reason to express itself in its ideal perfection in our secular interests. The mere effort of bringing our reflective thinking to bear upon the foundations of our belief must in itself be regarded as commendable; and it is this that has been responsible in no small measure for its contribution to the progress of human culture.

21. तं यथोपासते तदेव भवति इति ब्राह्मणम् ।

(*Bṛih. Up.*, V. 6. 1, S'ankara's commentary).

Man's whole life cannot be said to be completely rational. He has emotions, instincts, passions; he has his hunger and love, affections and hatred; and yet even then we are able to understand only if we allow reason to operate upon them. After all, we have to think of the objects of our love, to know which things satisfy our hunger and which things deserve our affection or our hatred. Civilization, of which religion forms a very important component, cannot be thought to have reached the present stage of perfection without the part critical reflection must have played in the course of its history.

While thus, on the one hand, in the interest of religion we have to welcome the critical reinterpretation and criticism of our beliefs, on the other hand, there are many who, because the objects which it deals with are very high and are above reason, and the characteristics of religious consciousness, while touching all other sides of mental life, are completely isolated from the intellect, leap forward to claim that there is no necessity of the exercise of critical reflection on it. Thus, an objection to a critical assessment of our religious beliefs leads such people to hold that the essence of religion is revealed in mysticism. Religion in the height of its perfection is essentially mystical in character. As what a thing is, is what marks its culmination and perfection, religion must be identified with mysticism. But mysticism, which pervades the whole of man's mental and spiritual life, develops rather in defiance of the dictates of the intellect.

If, therefore, true religion is mysticism and has to deal with our feelings and emotions, rather than with the intellect, religion must be exempted from the need of the intellect to understand and interpret its assumptions and foundations. What is valuable in religion is behaviour or conduct and not thought or belief. The standard, therefore, of the assessment of religious belief is practical rather than theoretical. We judge a man not by what intellectual outlook he holds to be true regarding the

nature and constitution of the world and his place in it, but rather by his relationships with his fellow-men. Hence doubt in respect of the validity of religious beliefs only engenders grave misconceptions rather than obliterates them. Not only sceptics and agnostics, but even devout believers express their hostility to the rational assessment of religious beliefs. They are of the opinion that doubt disturbs faith and prevents us from benefiting from the salutary results which it exercises on human conduct. Doubt seems really a spiritual disease and the denial of the validity of religious beliefs a veritable sin. They maintain that religion is not at all an affair of the intellect and that, therefore, intellectual scrutiny of it is not in conformity with its nature and essence.

XIII. Autonomy of Religious Experience :-

At the present time when science seems to have dominated our way of thinking, looking at things with the clear light furnished by it has dispelled much of our ignorance and many superstitions and dogmas. We no longer feel encouraged to believe in the reality of any miraculous revelation of God. There was a time when people believed that God reveals Himself on certain special occasions selected by Him in the course of history. Such expressions of the desire and activity of God were at variance with the normal course of nature, and that is why these strange occurrences were designated as miraculous. Miracles were considered to be special revelations of the nature and character of God. As these revelations were distinctively of a divine character and contravened all known laws of nature and reason, the intellect could never understand their mysteries and secrets. The proponents of this view were imperviously entrenched in the belief that it is left to God alone to reveal Himself to man and that there is nothing in human nature itself which can enable man to know Him. Human effort for the understanding of the working of God in the course of nature is impossible, because whether God can allow Himself to be

known by human intelligence is entirely a matter of His own choice and desire.

But nowadays beliefs in miracles and the special revelations of God have been shattered by the predominance of the scientific point of view. It is natural for such people as take science and scientific outlook to have a determining voice in all other spheres of human thought and action, to urge that the human intelligence cannot help us to understand the articles of faith. But many others also who do not recognize the competence of science to pronounce judgments on all human affairs, are not slow in casting doubt on the possibility of a critical assessment, from time to time, of religion and the theoretical understanding of it. They tell us that religious beliefs and the verities of divine knowledge come from above. These truths, they claim, come by way of emotions. There are some special spiritual powers and endowments in man through which these revelations and religious truths come. Intuition is a higher faculty for the comprehension of mysterious, inscrutable truths. Intuitive truths which are higher in the scale of knowledge, cannot be subjected to intellectual treatment and interpretation.

Then, again, there is another view that mere intellectual ideas are of no use to man. It is emotions and feelings which give inspiration, courage and strength to him. Religion is basically an emotional orientation to the ground of our existence and of the universe. As it is emotional rather than intellectual in nature, questions of truth or falsehood regarding religious beliefs are quite irrelevant. What matters in religion must be taken to be the values and constructive ideals for which it stands.

Moreover, religion is an autonomous activity of human nature. It stands by itself. There is nothing with which it can be compared. All the data and facts with which religion is concerned are so unique in nature that they bear no analogy with anything else known to us in our common experience. Even the

powers which man exercises in religion have a distinctive character of their own and are different from all his other powers. In fact, in religion the relation which man bears to other things, to God, and to his fellow-men, are direct and immediate, while in all his other activities man's relationships are indirect and mediate.

It is not possible for the poor intellect, analytic and abstract in nature, to comprehend or grasp the nature of religion and the specific manner in which man is able to deal with all beings and things in the world.

It would be interesting here to take into account the views of such leading thinkers as Carlyle, William James and Balfour on the one hand and of empiricists like John Stuart Mill and Spencer on the other hand. Carlyle's view has been hinted at in the foregoing paragraphs in which intellectual criticism of religion has been held to be destructive of religious beliefs. William James points out that religion is entirely a matter of our will to believe. We are not at all concerned in religion to enquire whether or not there is any reality at the root of the universe, some supernatural force or principle. What matters is the efficacious result religion brings about. Not all things in life require evidence for being acted upon. There are many interests in which we need to embark upon an adventure without any evidence on our side. We have to take a risk. The disadvantages of not taking the risk outnumber the advantages of taking it. This is so, because, without taking the risk, there is absolutely no possibility of any gain or advantage : and if there is any advantage, it certainly marks the crowning achievement of one's life. William James and others with him, therefore, tell us that religion is similar in nature to some of those occupations of man in which risk brings about a rich harvest.

The objection that religion is essentially volitional in character and that, therefore, religious questions cannot be

answered by reason, can be met by pointing out that there is no unrelieved antagonism between the true and the good. Doubt engendered by reason can be removed by reason alone.²² It cannot be held that there is nothing final and absolute in what is settled by reason. Even this assertion is established by reason itself. If we do not obliterate doubts by penetrating into the nature of the object that is the object of doubt, they will be allowed free play and can affect the whole of our mental life, leading to its degeneration and destruction.

Josiah Royce rightly observes that doubt is not only a privilege in the matter of religious experience, but is also a sacred duty of the philosopher. "As for doubt on religious questions," says Royce, "that is for a truth-seeker not only a privilege but a duty, and as we shall experience all through this study, doubt has a curious and very valuable place in philosophy. Philosophic truth, as such, comes to us first under the force of doubt, and we never can be very near it in our search unless, for a longer or shorter time, we have come to despair of it altogether. First, then, the despair of a thorough-going doubt, and then the discovery that this doubt contains in its bosom the truth that we are sworn to discover...—this is the typical philosophic experience."²³ Rāmaṇuja says that mere faith, unsupported by reason, is incompetent to lend support to the credentials of religion.²⁴

It is doubt that purifies religion from any possible error. Doubt not only removes error, but even substantiates and authenticates the germ of truth that religion contains. Doubt

22. न हि प्रतिष्ठितस्तर्क एव नास्तीति शक्यते वक्तुम् । एतद्विहिं
हि तर्कानामप्रतिष्ठितत्वं तर्कैरेव प्रतिष्ठाप्यते ।

(*Brahma-Sūtras*, II. 1. 2., Sankara's Commentary).

23. *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, pp. 13-14.

24. अद्विधानामेव मयं पक्षे इति शास्त्रविदो न बहुमन्यन्ते ।

(*Vedāntasāṅgraha*, p. 38).

confirms the kernel of truth contained in religion. It strengthens the hold of the religious believer on the truths which he had been only blindly believing. The rational nature of man cannot allow him to accept any truth without enquiry. The authority of mere tradition has no value, because unless it is made part of one's experience, it cannot have any authority whatsoever. Principles of conduct always require the necessity of critical reflection. Religious experience, therefore, has always got to be subjected to critical reflection, for this is the only manner in which we can be assured of its truth. Even if it be claimed that religion has a kind of validity and a kind of strength unparalleled in other spheres of knowledge, this validity and this strength have to be examined. It is common knowledge that power or strength, unexercised and unexamined, turns into vagueness and feebleness. Strength and power are revealed only during the severest trials and tests.

The argument that doubts in religious matters can be dispelled by action is not quite valid, inasmuch as intelligence is such a power in human nature that it must produce restlessness, unless it is able to understand the real nature of the thing which it has doubted. In fact, action can never remove doubt, because doubt pertains to the cognitive function of the mind which requires answer from those faculties and powers of the mind which bring it into contact with objects for the revelation of their essential character. Doubt, indeed, can be silenced. But it creates imbalance and a state of suspended action with no reference to any system of thought and belief on which man can rest and by means of which he can bring about order and coherence between his conflicting impulses, tendencies and desires. Doubt has a disintegrating effect on the human personality, and if its integrity is to be maintained, it is not by action. Only persistent efforts for the knowledge of things can dispel doubt. It is not helpful, therefore, in the matter of religion which is concerned with ultimate principles, to hold that action and not knowledge or the exercises of the intellect

that can eliminate all our suspicions regarding the validity of religious experience.

XIV. Attack on the Need of Philosophical Inquiry of Religion :

The assertion that religion is essentially emotional in nature and origin and is not, therefore, concerned with truth or falsehood, must sound strange in the ears of man whose reason cannot exempt him from the obligation to examine even those values on which he rests his conduct. After all, before anything is considered valuable, it is natural for us to be convinced of its character as something we need for fulfilling our needs. Questions of truth cannot be isolated from those of value. We no doubt entertain emotions for certain things, emotions either of love or of hate; yet they all presuppose a prior state of the knowledge of such things. Before anything is to be desired or shunned, we need to understand its essential character. Emotion, in other words, is itself an after-effect of the cognition of a thing, imperfect though it may be. If it is thus a matter of common knowledge not to love or hate persons and things without knowledge of them, why should we hesitate to struggle for our knowledge in regard to such great things as whether there is or is not in truth evidence for the existence of God or a supernatural power, an omnipotent and omniscient mind behind the flux of events designated *samsāra* or the universe?

The view, therefore, that a philosophical examination of religious experience is uncalled for, arises out of an inadequate view of the nature of emotions themselves. Emotions, in fact, cannot be moral or spiritual in themselves. We however characterise them as good or bad, worthy or unworthy, moral or immoral. But it may be asked what their basis in the cognitive function of the human intellect is, how they can be supposed to possess the characteristics we attribute to them and by which they are known to us. There is, that is

to say, no emotion without its being judged as good or bad. But judging emotions in terms of their characterisation as good or bad presupposes intellectual assessment of the objects of our emotions.

To say that truths of religion are above reason does not amount to the affirmation that it is a purely irrational affair. It is true that the proof of its validity does not lie merely in propositions of a certain kind. It is true that religion has for its object nothing which has only relative or instrumental value. The object of religion is Absolute Value or Absolute Worth. Yet, we must be sure that the object of religious belief is really the Absolute. In fact, in all our undertakings and apprehensions of objects and events or phenomena, our whole self is involved. We not only desire to know things, but our knowledge is determined by the purpose which they are expected to serve or by their capacity to meet some genuine need of our personality. It is not only emotional satisfaction, but also the knowledge as to their capacity to fulfil the requirements of a worthy ideal, that reorder human attitude and conduct to them.

The true, the good and the beautiful are mutually implicative. We cannot separate the good from the true. Hence, any statement affirming the subordination of the true to the good arises from a misconception of their real nature. We cannot isolate the good from the true, if at all we do not want it to be merely empty and illusory. Nor is it reasonable to hold that because religion is an autonomous activity and thus radically differs from all other human concerns, it authorises us to exempt it from the criticism of its nature and function. Religion, no doubt, involves the direct relation of man to the Divine Being, and the poor intellect cannot penetrate into His nature. Nevertheless, we cannot believe that we are utterly incapable of understanding the Divine or the Infinite. In other words, we may not comprehend Him, but this does not amount to our complete ignorance of Him. We cannot admit that the

Infinite or the whole which gives a certain coherence and intelligibility to all things is itself unintelligible.

In his Introduction to his Commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*, the great Śaṅkarācārya has answered the same objection as a preliminary basis for plunging into an enquiry into the nature of *Brahman*. He says that enquiry into the nature of *Brahman* is impossible if *Brahman* is unintelligible, and is pointless if It is already known to us. He breaks these two horns of the dilemma by holding that *Brahman* is not completely unintelligible. In fact, the Infinite which is completely unintelligible to us is no genuine Infinite. The Infinite is not completely isolated from the finite. How can we talk of any concept of the Infinite or of any idea of it, unless in some way or other we are already familiar with its nature? The knowledge of the limits of a certain thing is also the knowledge of that which lies beyond those limits. Śaṅkara, therefore, says that the Infinite is not utterly unknown.

Of course, we possess the knowledge of the Infinite, but this knowledge is not a conscious and clear one. It is just the need to perfect and consummate this vague awareness of *Brahman* into a clear and conscious one that prompts the enquiry into the nature of *Brahman*. We cannot, therefore, say that just because the Infinite is the object of religion we need not bother our heads to have a systematic, intelligible and consistent treatment of the central convictions on which it rests. Without critical scrutiny, how can we even advance the view that religion stands by itself with its autonomous activity and is different from all other concerns and occupations of human life?

Making a distinction between science and religion and holding thus that the sphere of the latter is the sphere of the Unknowable while that of the former is what everyone knows, or can know, another celebrated thinker, Spencer has argued out the case for the impossibility of a philosophical examination of our religious beliefs. The provinces of knowledge in science

and religion are so well defined and demarcated from each other and so non-communicating that there can be no point in thinking of a rational account of religion. What we are able to know and what is within the reach of our powers of knowledge and understanding is Nature with which science deals, but the Supernatural is the sphere of religion. Our knowledge of the Supernatural, it may be confessed, is next to nothing. Perhaps we know nothing more of the Supernatural than that it merely exists. We cannot claim any knowledge of the Supernatural in the sense of knowing ordinary objects presented to our senses and the mind. It is, no doubt, a fact that religion is a universal phenomenon and that we all of us are in possession of certain feelings, sentiments and emotions which can be called religious. The religious sentiment and instincts also are not intelligible, except by reference to something which transcends Nature and the order of the finite existence. As this principle to which religion refers, is utterly beyond the region of the finite and is not at all accessible to the senses and the intellect, there is no point in thinking that we can fully understand our relations to it.

It is through such objections that Spencer tried to demonstrate the impossibility of a rational exposition and treatment of religious experience. "Natural theology," he says, "is a science falsely so called....It seeks to weigh the infinite in the balance of the finite....It is to the scientific man a delusion, to the religious man a share."²⁵ "The office of theology", says Lewes, "is now generally recognised as distinct from that of science.....It confesses its inability to furnish knowledge with any available data. It restricts itself to the region of faith, and leaves to philosophy and science the region of inquiry".²⁶ "We not only learn by the frustration

25. Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 49.

26. Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, p. 3.

of all our efforts that the reality underlying appearance is totally and for ever inconceivable by us; but we also learn why from the very nature of our intelligence it must be so".²⁷

Grant that the principle behind Nature is utterly distinct from what is understandable in terms of the categories of thought, that, as Kant points out, there is no possibility of our even penetrating into its mysteries and depths. Kant demolished the structure of Natural Theology. For these writers, thus, religion is exclusively a matter of faith and, as faith is the opposite counterpart of reason, there can be no philosophy of religion.

The above objection denies knowledge of the element of transcendence in human knowledge and experience. But even the transcendent factor in human experience and knowledge is such that we cannot say that it is utterly unknown to us and that it is not accessible and intelligible to the human mind, even though the senses or the mind, by perception and inference, cannot help us to know it. Knowledge itself may be supposed to be of many kinds, sensuous knowledge being one of them. If the objection of both Kant and Spencer implies that a systematic, intelligible and coherent treatment, interpretation and exposition of religion is not possible because its object is not known by the senses and the intellect, then this does not carry any weight, because it is just this verdict that unites all the great seers in all the religious traditions of the world. From time immemorial, religious believers themselves have reserved a special sphere of knowledge in which experience of God and of supernatural truths takes place in a manner not found in that province of knowledge which is called science. The objects claimed to be known in science and in religion also are radically different.

27. Herbert Spencer, *Op. cit.* p. 33.

In this sense, we can say that a rational exposition, interpretation and understanding of the great truths of religion is impossible. But objection is taken to question and rule out altogether the possibility of any transcendent factor even in our common experience. It is held that knowledge cannot transcend immanent categories and is intelligible in terms of factors and conditions belonging to the world in time and space. All religious experiences, therefore, and all propositions concerning the nature and character of God which have accumulated in the course of centuries, may thus turn out to be mere fictions and chimeras. With the growth of science they are destined to die a natural death. Spencer and his colleagues do not call into question the existence of such a thing as the religious sentiment, but the damaging remark they make is that the object of religious emotions or sentiments is unknowable. Spencer is of the opinion that all religious emotions derive their strength and effectiveness from the fact that their object is inscrutable, mysterious and unknown. We cannot possibly entertain the feelings of awe, wonder, humility, submission and surrender towards something with which we are already familiar. Religion is nothing except mute reverence for the Unknowable.

It would be helpful, before we take up a systematic criticism of this point of view, to review the arguments which have been advanced in support of this contention. Kant and his colleagues point out that the conditions of knowledge require that a thing to be known be given in space and time, and be such as is the cause or source of some sensations. Further, things are known only by being distinguished from one another, by being limited by other things, and by being shown that, while they possess some features, other determinations of their nature are wanting in them. Some characteristics, again, which they exclude, are possessed by others. Because God or the Infinite, as even Saṅkarācārya has shown, cannot thus be shown to possess such characteristic features and cannot thus be limited by other objects, we cannot claim knowledge of Him.

XV. The Reality of the Transcendent Principle in all Knowledge :

All these objections to the philosophy of religion or to an intelligible account of God at least point to the irresistible conclusion that the existence itself of the Absolute is something which cannot be questioned. Kant and Spencer are agnostics, but agnosticism does not question the existence of that which it declares to be unknown and unknowable to us. However, they tell us that our knowledge of God or of the Absolute is not definite and that it always continues to be something quite vague and obscure. While our knowledge of other things is definite and positive, there is no definite and positive knowledge of the Absolute. Our experience of it is hardly any better than ignorance.

But to this argument the following reply can be given. In the first place we cannot reasonably hold that human knowledge is confined to the finite order without knowing what lies beyond space and time. We cannot know the limit of a thing without knowing that which lies beyond it or by which it is limited. "We are most nearly awake when we dream that we dream". The question is: are we ever able to understand what knowledge itself is without recognising the reality of something which conditions the possibility of knowledge?

If we closely examine the contention that there can be no rational understanding and exposition of divine truths or of religious beliefs, because they belong to a sphere that is utterly different from the province of human knowledge which is inherently finite and relative, it turns out to be shallow. We cannot plead ignorance of the Infinite, because it is something known to us *a priori*. It is unquestionably the standard by comparison with which we are led to think that our knowledge of all other things is finite. In fact, in the same mental act, we at once know the limits of human knowledge and intelligence

and also that which is beyond it. Both these forms of awareness and knowledge are correlative, so that we cannot say that while our finite knowledge or intelligence enables us to know the things of the world, the Infinite is utterly inaccessible to us. No one can claim to be sleeping, if he is aware or conscious of the fact that he is dreaming. Similarly, we cannot be conscious of the imperfections of our knowledge as something relative and imperfect without knowing that which is Infinite and perfect. We must get away from the prejudice that the Infinite, who is the principle of our own intelligence, emotion and will, is utterly inaccessible and unintelligible. If reason is what helps us to discriminate and understand things outside, it is impossible that in its own house it can be a foreigner.

Hence there is always the necessity of a philosophical or rational interpretation or exposition of religious beliefs and divine truths. More often than not, we worship even our fancies as our God or Absolute. To examine if what we believe is really something existent and worthy is itself a rewarding experience, because it stabilizes and consolidates our thoughts and regulates our will and action. In this way, it can be shown that the fact of the permanent existence of religious experience implies the possibility of a permanent philosophy of religion. If reality is what by its knowledge can redeem us, remove our ignorance and bring happiness, it is folly to live in a fool's paradise and to admire and worship something which does not deserve the homage of mankind.

This emphasis, however, on the clarification of what we believe and the treatment and exposition of religious beliefs misleads us into thinking that the philosophy of religion can displace religion itself or be a substitute of it. A theory, howsoever perfect, scientific, systematic, intelligible and coherent it may be, is after all the theory about a fact and cannot be abstracted from it. It is as absurd to think of the substitution of natural theology or the philosophy of religion for

religion itself as to ensure the health of a child by teaching him a treatise on physiology. Man is religious long before he comes to reflect upon his moral and religious life. The unconscious and conscious regions of the mind are at the root of all our thinking, feeling and willing and we all know, feel and will long before we come to examine whether our knowledge of things and our feelings for them and also the actions that their objects have prompted are really worthwhile or not. We know many things unconsciously before we are able to examine the conditions that have rendered such knowledge possible. People have been speaking language, using sentences and propositions without knowing at all what the characteristic features of language are and what conditions are to be fulfilled if our language has to be systematic and coherent. Not that the characteristics which on a closer analysis are found to belong to our language and to our social, political and economic institutions, have not been there already. They have, undoubtedly, been existing, though our knowledge of them before we analysed them was unconscious

There is always, therefore, the necessity of bringing ideas and beliefs entertained by us to a cold, dispassionate and impartial scrutiny, so that we may understand the nature of the effects they exert on human life and conduct. Mere zeal for one's religion "without breadth of knowledge," says E. A. Burtt, "is at best an unstable, at worst a social danger."²⁸ This warning has, therefore, always to be borne in mind, lest we should be tempted to think that progress in civilisation should in course of time altogether stamp out religion from us. So long as man continues to be human, he will have religion alongside of other secular interests. But natural theology or the philosophy of religion cannot take its place. Two errors

28. *Types of Religious Philosophy*, p. 3 Harper & Bros., New York, 1951.

have always to be avoided, namely, the error of thinking that philosophy can be abstracted from life and the other error which recommends the separation of life from philosophy. Human experience or human knowledge is an organism of which our different experiences form part. They have the same place in the organism of knowledge as the cells have in the living organism. It is, therefore, always necessary to co-ordinate religious experience with other secular interests of life, because being centred in an ultimate attitude of thought, feeling and action towards all things, it cannot but pervade all over. It is always an advantage to understand religion in its close connection with life of which it is a part. The philosophy of religion is religion itself brought to self-consciousness. Hence it presupposes rather than questions the existence of religious experience. Natural theology only makes us more conscious of what we believe, so that what is found to be true will continue always to be honoured and venerated by us. But, on the other hand, life also cannot be isolated from philosophy. Socrates taught long ago that an unexamined life is not worth living. Hence in conformity to the demands of the human intelligence, we cannot set aside the persistent urge for a critical assessment of what we think, feel and believe. We have seen how neither blind faith nor dogmatic scepticism about the validity of religious beliefs can make any ultimate appeal to human intelligence. We should neither be cowards fighting shy of a fearless and courageous analysis of religious consciousness lest reason should disturb our faith, nor should we be sceptics, challenging the very truth or validity of religious experience, which if it were an utter illusion would not certainly have persisted as a recognisable force in human civilisation and culture. Perennial religion, therefore, must have a perennial philosophy of religion.

The warning of Josiah Royce deserves always to be borne in mind so that we might not be led astray: "Our right to clear thought, we must insist upon. For looked at philosophically,

and apart from the necessary limitations of the hard worker, all this dumb reverence, this vague use of vague names, has its serious dangers. You are reverent, we may say to the man who regards philosophic criticism as a dangerous trifling with stupendous truths; you are reverent, but what do you reverence? Have a care lest what you reverence should turn out to be your own vague and confused notions, and not the real divine Truth at all. Take heed lest your object of worship be only your own little pet infinite, that is sublime to you mainly because it is yours, and that is in truth about as divine and infinite as your hat. For this is the danger that besets these vague and lofty sentiments. Unreflected upon, uncriticised, dumbly experienced, dumbly dreaded, these, your religious objects, may become mere feelings, mere visceral sensations of yours, that you have on Sunday mornings, or when you pray. Of course, if you are a worker, you may actually realise these vague ideas, in so far as they inspire you to work. If they do, they shall be judged by their fruits. Otherwise, do not trust too confidently their religious value. You, individually regarded, are but a mass of thought and feeling. What is only yours and, in you, is not divine at all. Unless you lift it up into the light of thought and examine it often, how do you know into what your cherished religious ideal may not have rotted in the darkness of your emotions?"²⁹

XV. Philosophy as the Spiritual and Religious Educator of Mankind :

In conclusion, we may say in regard to the exact relationship between philosophy and religion that, in the first place, we must guard ourselves against thinking that philosophy is a

29. Josiah Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, pp. 12-13, Harper & Bros, New York, 1958

substitute for religion. Philosophy, or strictly speaking, the philosophy of religion can no more be a substitute for religion than literature can be replaced by grammar. It is this mistake of replacing religion by the philosophy of religion or what we might say natural religion, which characterises the 18th century religious thought of the West. This undue emphasis on mere natural theology in utter abstraction from profound religious experiences ultimately resulted in deism. The drastic consequences of this habit of thinking in its turn brought about almost all the anti-religious tendencies of scepticism, agnosticism and atheism which became the dominant characteristics of 19th century Western thought. We must be careful always to remember that philosophy is at best only a formal, interpretative, evaluative occupation of the human mind which examines the pre-suppositions of human experience. It covers the entire range of human experience and tries to discover the basic assumptions and foundations of all the different fragments and departments into which it can be divided. Because the very nature of philosophy is such that nothing short of the entire range of human experience falls within its purview of critical assessment and examination, it cannot itself be based upon the methods characteristic of the study of the data of one particular section or part of human knowledge.

In other words, the method of science cannot be adopted by philosophy as the means of the treatment of human experience as a whole. Such a procedure amounts to mistaking a part for the whole. Just because, therefore, philosophy is not science and because also, on the basis of the postulates, assumptions and methods of science, no intelligible account of human experience as a whole can be given, philosophy fulfils its task only if it arrives at a point of view which is more comprehensive and which proves itself to be an insight into the nature of ultimate reality. Hence reality as it is presented to us is itself hierarchical. The intellectual curiosity of what it is that is

really ultimate is quite natural for the human mind and cannot, therefore, be thought to be the product of idle thinking. Religion, on the other hand, which is distinct from secular consciousness, refers all things back to the ultimate. Like philosophy, it cannot rest content with anything short of that which is ultimate in the sense that it is the source and the destiny of all things, it is that from which not only does everything originate but also that to which ultimately it returns as well, or is that which our reason obliges us to reckon as the ultimate and is thus both the *alpha* and the *omega* of all things.

Philosophy, therefore, in virtue of adopting a purely rational method of enquiry and investigation of the nature of the whole compass of human experience, finds ultimately all its problems, issues, queries and doubts silenced when it is directly confronted with that which is a matter not of mere abstract, intellectual convictions on the part of man but is assuredly one of which he claims a direct, immediate experience. Philosophy and religion are both concerned with the Ultimate, but their methods of approach to it are bound to be different, and hence the former cannot be substituted for the latter. It can be said that philosophy is, after all, only a study from the outside of that which forms the content and substance of the deepest, most intimate and most profound experiences of mankind which, just because they cannot be expressed exactly as they are experienced, have to be communicated through the language of concepts and reason which can make them intelligible to those who, having had no direct confrontation with reality, can at least be brought to believe in the reasonableness of the religious attitude and spiritual convictions. Religious experience is thus the product of the creative side of human nature, and philosophy as the science or discipline of giving only an intelligible account of it can be no substitute for religion. "The philosopher", Fichte boldly says, "has no God at all and can have no God; he has only a concept of the concept or of the Idea of God. It is only in life that there is God and religion: but the philosopher

as such is not the whole complete man, and it is impossible for any one to be only a philosopher."³⁰

Unless there is already religious experience, there cannot be any attempt to uncover its theoretical or intellectual foundations or the principles involved in it. It is common knowledge that in the first instance, our knowledge of things is unconscious. We bring our reason to bear upon what we know unconsciously only to make our knowledge of it more clear and explicit, systematic, consistent and intelligible to us and also communicable to others. To say that we cannot know things except by scientific understanding, without in other words laying hold of the principles involved in them, is to hold that we cannot know the cause of anything except by knowing the principle of causality or without our ability to analyse the concepts of cause and effect and the inseparable relation between them. Philosophy, as Hegel was not tired of saying, is not an absolutely *a priori* method of knowing things. Its foundations are laid deep in the very substance and structure of human experience upon which, unless it is already there and has its character in all its forms and in all its complexity and richness revealed to us, philosophy cannot operate. In Hegel's words: "The sphere of philosophy is the Universal. We may say, if we like, that it is retrospective. It is the spectator of all time and all existence, it is its duty to view things *sub specie aeternitatis*. To comprehend the universe of thought in all its features, to reduce the solid structures which mind has created to fluidity and transparency in the pure medium of thought, to set free the fossilised intelligence which the Great Magician who controls the destinies of the world has hidden under the mask of Nature, of the Mind of man, of the works of Art, of the institutions of the State and the orders of Society, and of religious forms and creeds:—such is the

30. William Wallace, *Prolegomena to the Study of Hegel's Philosophy*, p. 19, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1894.

complicated problem of philosophy. Its special work is to comprehend the world, not to try to make it better.

If it were the purpose of philosophy to reform and improve the existing state of things, it comes a little too late for such a task. "As the thought of the world," says Hegel, "it makes its first appearance at a time, when the actual fact has consummated its process of formation, and is now fully matured. This is the doctrine set forth by the notion of philosophy; but it is also the teaching of history. It is only when the actual world has reached its full fruition that the ideal rises to confront the reality, and builds up, in the shape of an intellectual realm, that same world grasped in its substantial being. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, some one shape of life has meanwhile grown old: and grey in grey, though it brings it into knowledge, cannot make it young again. The owl of Minerva does not start upon its flight, until the evening twilight has begun to fall."³¹

We have, however, to keep ourselves off from the opposite error also of adopting the uncritical complacent passive attitude to our experience in all its forms. There are no watertight divisions between the different functions of the human mind, and it is necessary that we should always subject our cognitive, emotional and practical experiences to critical assessment and enquiry. Religious experience, the ultimate attitude of mankind to that which is the ground of the entire compass of human experience, is expressed in his theoretical, emotional and practical adjustments to reality and permeates all the departments of his life and all his occupations: it has always to be subjected to critical scrutiny. All the same, the value of philosophy only as an auxiliary to religion or religious experience

31. *Philosophie des Rechts*, p. 20 (*Werke*, viii), quoted in Wallace, *Prolegomena*, p. 20.

can by no means be cast aside or looked upon as subordinate in importance to those interests and departments of human life which are concerned only with our secular needs. If we look closely and critically even at our secular needs, there will be no denying the fact that we can meet them and society be ordered ethically according to the principles of justice, only if we are not blind to the ultimate principles implicit in the science and discipline where the subject matter comprises the secular needs of our life. Ultimately, our happiness, peace and security depend upon an ultimate principle the knowledge of which it is the primary function of philosophy to impart. Fraser says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God. It is the office of religion and of philosophical education to assist in making the student aware of what is latent in his spiritual constitution, and implied in the Divine Reason in which we all share sub-consciously."³²

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF RELIGION

I. Confusion of Religion with Secularism

In the first Lecture we have called attention to the necessity of the scrutiny of our religious beliefs which we come to entertain only unconsciously and which our reason disturbs later. This primitive unconscious content of our beliefs, we try to make more conscious and clear to us. We have laid emphasis on the necessity of a clear understanding of the beliefs by which we live as the condition of a happier and a more integrated living. In the life of man a common reference or a common system of beliefs cannot be avoided, because without it life is allowed only to drift, to have no sense of purpose or direction, no focus on which our energies may be concentrated in order to introduce peace and happiness in our lives. As Sri Kṛṣṇa says: "In this, O joy of the Kurus (Arjuna), the resolute understanding is single; but the thoughts of the irresolute are many-branched and endless" 33

Man is by nature both a finite and an infinite being. While on the one hand he finds himself helplessly caught in the vortex of misery and anguish, of hope and despair, of trials and tribulations, and always yearns and strives for something he has not achieved, on the other, there is nothing in the finite order of existence which can give him complete satisfaction. In the words of Carlyle: "Will all the finance-ministers and upholsterers and confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in

jointstock company, to make one shoeblack happy? They cannot accomplish it above an hour or two; for the shoeblack also has a soul, quite other than his stomach, and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: God's infinite universe altogether to himself, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Try him with half a universe, half of an omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men. Always there is a black spot in our sunshine; it is even, as I said, the shadow of our selves."³⁴

This explains how unconsciously he is always haunted by the idea of the Infinite which certainly cannot be confined in the order of space and time. In fact, whatever pleasure or happiness he derives from the objects of the world is but a partial and imperfect manifestation of the transcendent. Roughly speaking, therefore, religion is rooted in the Transcendent or the Supernatural. We cannot think of religion without this Supernatural element of transcendent mystery by which the religious consciousness of man is affected. It is this haunting idea or consciousness of the Infinite and the Transcendent of which in the beginning man can claim to possess but a faint and feeble awareness that philosophy tries to make clear and conscious by trying to cast the light of reflection and reason on it, so that the vagueness and obscurity attaching to religious beliefs may be avoided in order to secure stability of faith.

Religion, therefore, cannot be a matter of mere immanent consciousness; otherwise, there would be nothing to distinguish religious consciousness from the secular consciousness. This difference is so radical that the latter can never exhaust the

34. *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Ch. 9.

former. Religious consciousness undoubtedly adds meaning to all our secular concerns and occupations which, therefore, is a clear indication of the decisive role that it plays in shaping our attitude to our life and its manifold interests. This caution in the context of religious argument seems to be necessary, because many modern thinkers are engaged in the uphill task of depriving religion of its transcendent and supernatural elements and characteristics. We must remember that while our secular interests may themselves be shaped, coloured and rendered more meaningful to us by bringing religion to bear upon them, there is also the necessity of not separating it from the former, although the two are so different from each other that they cannot be identified.

The word "secularism" was first coined by G. J. Holyoake (1817-1906) to designate an attempt to interpret and order life without belief in the existence of God, the Bible or a future life. Secularism is just the opposite of religion. Whereas religion tries to understand everything by reference to God and the Supernatural, secularism tries to withdraw our minds from anything supernatural and focuses our attention on everything earthly. Its plain meaning is negative, directing us to withdraw all reference to God and the Supernatural.

Positively, it means the understanding of all things by reference to immanent categories. It is thus that, as Harvey Cox tells us, it consists in "the deliverance of man 'first from religious and then from metaphysical control over reason and his language'". It is the loosing of the world from religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself, the dispelling of all closed world views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols. It represents 'defatalization of history', the discovery by man that he has been left with the world on his hands, that he can no longer blame fortune or the furies for what he does with it. Secularization occurs when man turns his

attention away from worlds beyond and towards this world and this time.”³⁵

A careful analysis, therefore, of the meaning of ‘Secularism’ leads to the following assumptions. First, that the world given in space and time is the only world that exists. There is nothing like eternity. All human values are earthly values confined in time and history. Secondly, religion with its meaning in the Transcendent has to be discarded. Religion is only unscientific superstition which can give no valid knowledge of the world. Religion and science are opposed, because religious beliefs have always hampered and thwarted scientific progress. Prayer and worship are excursions into a vague and unreal world. Thirdly, human knowledge is restricted only to the phenomena and events which man can observe and experiment upon. ‘Positivism’ is an essential component in the meaning of the term ‘secularism’. There is, finally, in the secular point of view, an unqualified exclusion of any reference to anything else on which man can depend for the expression of his potentialities. Man is autonomous in character. There is no knowledge beyond the natural world which man acquires in his uninterrupted regular commerce with its objects bound together by manifold relations. There is no necessity for dependence on any circumstance or factor outside man. Human needs can be satisfied by the realisation of man’s own resources and potentialities for knowledge and by the application of what he knows to all his requirements. Rather than helping him, religion only proves to be a hindrance which has kept man in servile obedience to and dependence upon the Supernatural which stands as an insurmountable barrier to his intellectual and moral perfection and advancement.

The above characteristics of the secular point of view need to be clearly remembered by us in order that we may guard

35. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, pp 15-16, a Pelican book, 1966.

ourselves against confusing it with the religious interpretation of life and existence. Many modern theologians, like Paul Van Buren and Bonhoeffer, tried to reduce religion to purely ethical dimensions. This emphasis has undoubtedly exercised a damaging effect on our attitude to religion. Lest ethics or morality which no doubt forms an inalienable feature and content of religion should be taken to be completely exhaustive of it, we must beware of this possible misconception.

II. No Religion without the Transcendent Element in Experience

Any understanding or explanation of the religious point of view must start with the idea of the Transcendent and the recognition of a supernatural world beyond the world of space and time. Knowledge is an ultimate fact which must be the basis of our constructive thinking. It is a completely ridiculous objection against the religious interpretation of life and existence to hold that there is no necessity of explaining whatever we know, feel and do by reference to anything else which is not within the grasp of the senses and the mind. Not all things existent and real can be claimed to be within the accessible reach of human knowledge. The basis and principle of all our knowledge, feeling and action must itself be beyond the scope of ordinary knowledge. Unless we put the cart before the horse and invert the natural order of things, we cannot make the facile statement that what is the ineluctable basis of human experience in all its forms of thought, feeling and action should itself be made an object of them.

Mystics and seers who have claimed a direct and immediate intuition of God, have announced with one voice the existence and reality of this Transcendent Principle in our experience. There is no need of any attempt to prove the existence of God, as has been tried by philosophers from the time of St. Thomas Aquinas onwards. God forms the explanatory principle of

human existence and experience. The idea of God is an absolutely *a priori* idea. It is something given and evident to us, which of course we are not required to prove. As the Transcendent or God does not belong to the category of ordinary objects, there is no question of knowing Him in the ordinary way and demanding knowledge of Him by the application of the method we are required to apply to our knowledge of the objects of the world. Śaṅkarācārya has eloquently emphasised in his Introduction to his Commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* that it is not the intention of the Scripture to demonstrate the existence of God in the manner of the ordinary objects of our sense perception³⁶. The demand to prove the existence of God arises from the misconception of His nature. It is forgotten that God is Spirit and does not belong to the order of space and time. The *Upaniṣads* are not tired of emphasising that God is the inmost reality within us, the core and the essence of the universals, and that, therefore, not by ordinary means but only by spiritual methods and techniques can we ever know Him³⁷.

In fact, human life would virtually be held to be without any meaning if there were nothing transcendent beyond the world and the human existence. If all things were completely exhausted in the world and in human experience, if there were no other world, nothing more profound, more sublime, more enthralling, more captivating, more bewitching, and

36. न हि शास्त्रमिदन्तया विषयभूतं ब्रह्म प्रतिपादयिषति

(*Vedānta Sūtras*, I. 1. 4, Śaṅkara's Commentary)

37. अन्योऽन्यतर आत्माऽऽनन्दमयः

(*Taitt. Up.* II. 5);

गुहाहितं गह्वरेष्ठं पुराणम्

(*Kaṭh. Up.* I. 2. 12);

यो वेद निहितं गुहायां परमे व्योमन्

(*Taitt. Up.* II. 1)

more attractive than the spatio-temporal world and man confined within it, there would certainly be no point in living our lives which would certainly be no better than straws carried away by the streams of a river as it were. But there is a certain charm and pleasure even in the mere act of living, in spite of all miseries and anxieties we are obliged to face. The *Atharva Veda* speaks of what it calls the Surplus in man and the *Upaniṣads* emphatically assert that *Brahman* who is of the nature of bliss and creative joy, makes a gift of His fecundity to all living beings on earth because of which they experience pleasure even in the mere act of living. If there were no joy in the world, asks the *Upaniṣad*, who would live, who would breathe?

Therefore, the plain fact is that both man and God are correlated principles. It is impossible to think of human existence as something sufficient in itself. Man, without God, is a being without any stability, aim, purpose or destiny. God is the explanation of man's deepest mystery. Religion is only the recognition of this mystery in human life. If there were no mystery, there would be no religion at all. At the very outset, therefore, in our attempt to explain the nature and content of religion, we must guard ourselves against the misconceptions that have, in the course of history, surrounded a consistent and systematic treatment of its nature. The secular and the Transcendent are utterly distinct principles, so that the meaning of the latter cannot be derived from and understood in terms of the former. Religion has something in it which transcends the ethical and the secular order. Religion, being essentially different from morality and all secular interests, must always be distinguished from them. We, therefore, take as the starting point of our exposition of the meaning and content of religion, the recognition of the reality of a Transcendent Principle which is wholly other than the given finite order of existence and of human beings. God, as we have emphasised over and over again, is given. It is that by which we are confronted in every moment of our existence. There is no question of proving His reality.

The difficulty concerning our knowledge of God arises mainly from the fact that we do not usually possess a clear consciousness of Him. Like many other occupations and interests, in the first instance; our awareness of God is unconscious, which means that we know Him even without being conscious of Him. Freud has taught us that there is both a conscious and unconscious knowledge of things.

III. The Problem of God and the Definition of Religion

Because we are aware of many things without being conscious of them, we doubt their existence and reality, as our knowledge of them is not clear and definite. Let us, for example, think of the so-called solipsist who does not believe in the existence of selves other than his own self. But can it be denied that no one can be aware of one's own self without being conscious of other individuals? It is only in the awareness of others that we can be conscious of ourselves. Our knowledge of God as something given is of the same kind, being merely an unconscious or indefinite awareness. We cannot, on the mere subjective assurance of the solipsist, believe in what he says. Since other human beings are objects of our perception, we do not think it necessary to prove to him that they are matters of direct and immediate consciousness and that, therefore, solipsism itself would remain unaccountable but for the acceptance of the existence of all other selves that exist in reality.

Can we, following the same argument, say that just because we all perceive the external physical world, it is not something known to the solipsist who denies its reality? In a similar way, the so-called atheists deny the existence of God, even though they are aware of His objective presence. Hence, we can doubtless be aware of many things the existence of which we are free to deny or doubt. John Cook Wilson has discussed the problem of our knowledge of God in his essay, 'Rational

Grounds for Belief in God'.³⁸ He tries to show that people do not actually cease to believe in the existence of God, howsoever violently and stoutly they may oppose the position that there can be reasonable evidence for belief in His reality. The object of Professor Cook Wilson is to demonstrate the truth of the proposition that the direct presence of God in the consciousness of many people is compatible with their usual emphatic assertion that they have no direct experience or knowledge of God. In that paper, the learned Professor has put forward compelling arguments to show that men possess knowledge of many things without being clearly conscious of them: the true business of philosophy is not to create belief in the existence of God, but rather to bring this belief to a consciousness of itself.

The existence of God is, in our opinion, the very starting point of religion to the extent that religion stands or falls with the acceptance or rejection of belief in the reality and existence of Him. Religious consciousness is the consciousness of God, though our knowledge of Him may not, in the first instance, be a conscious one. The question whether God is directly or immediately perceived by us or whether He is an object of inferential knowledge will occupy our attention in the next chapter. For the present, we shall merely remark that religion is not at all a concept of immanent categories. It cannot be understood in its true essence by prescinding it from the Transcendent. No doubt, there are many religions in which the existence of God is not acknowledged. Nevertheless, it is no less evident that in them also belief is centred on something to which are attributed all perfections which, the religious believer thinks, have their final source and centre in God. Moreover, all religions may be regarded as different stages in one process at the end of which they may fulfil themselves in coming to a conscious recognition of the existence of God, even though they

38. *Statement and Inference*, Vol II, Concluding chapter.

might have started in their early career with ignorance or unconscious cognition of Him.

Any definition or understanding of religion, therefore, must involve this primary incontrovertible principle of the Transcendent designated by us God. But the seeming contradiction between the acceptance of the existence of God and the recognition of religions without God as religious in the genuine sense of the term is such that we may be compelled either to dispense with any endeavour to explain the nature and content of religion by reference primarily to the existence of God, or we may not think atheistic forms of it to be religion in the original sense of the term. Religion itself has etymologically been taken to mean that process which binds us to something greater than ourselves.³⁹ That this belief in the existence of God is the common element even in primitive religions has been pointed out by many anthropologists. The evidence for belief in the existence of God, for example, is to be found in the belief of the primitive people in the presence in the world of a supernatural power which they designated by the names of Mana, Orenda and so forth.

Christopher Dawson says: "If William James is right in his conclusion 'that there is in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call "something there", more deep and more general than any of the special and particular senses, by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed', then one must expect this intuition to be found in the most diverse conditions of human thought and culture without any necessary relation to the capacity for rational expression."⁴⁰

39. 'Religion' from *religare*, to bind (Lactantius, Augustine, Servius Honoratus).

40. *Religion and Culture*, p. 40, Sheen & Ward, New York, 1948.

The study of primitive religion during the last century has tended to emphasize more and more the importance of primitive ideas of supernatural power which are not necessarily derived from a belief in particular gods or spirits or from the technique of the professional magician. Words like the Polynesian Mana, the North American Orenda, Wakan, Manito, Yok etc. are found amongst very many primitive peoples and denote an impersonal power—"an ocean of supernatural energy" as J. R. Swanton calls it—which manifests itself in Nature and in visions and in all events which appear portentous or miraculous. The anthropologists may describe this element as "magical", the students of comparative religion as "numinous" or "dynamistic", and the theologians as "divine"; but whatever term is used, the distinctive thing about it is its transcendent character. It is always felt as something outside man's common experience: an other world, an other power, an other being, which forcibly or mysteriously imposes itself on this world of human beings and human power as greater or more powerful or more sacred. No doubt, in many cases this transcendent quality is attached to persons and things, as in the case of Mana which is associated with the person of the sacred chief in Polynesia, or as with the West African fetish and the North American "medicine bundle". But this does not detract from its transcendent character, any more than the power of working miracles or the veneration of sacred relics conflicts with the doctrine of divine transcendence in the higher religions. In fact, the conception of Mana can be most easily understood as a pagan analogy to the Christian conception of grace.⁴¹

Taking into account the prodigious variety and complexity of the forms of religion which do not stand on the same level, it is really a tremendous task for us to define or understand it. It is not possible to define it in neat and clear terms, because it

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 39

is so comprehensive in nature that it excludes nothing, whereas for a logical definition a certain measure of exclusion is essential. We must not forget that it is a very complex phenomenon which, as William James rightly points out, has a connotation which includes many things, and that consequently for this reason each of the elements involved in it, just because in one way or another it directly or indirectly contributes to the total effect of the whole process, may be called religion. But while this expedient may be adopted by us, taking into consideration the prodigious variety of the manifestations of religious experience, as a measure of making allowance for their varied expressions, we cannot be supposed to make our conception clear by excluding from its connotation this ineluctable reference to the existence of God. It would be clear to us, as we proceed in our argument and as we have emphasised over and over again, that if religion is different from ethics which is nearest to it and also from all other secular interests, the decisive principle which demarcates it from all of them must be the belief in the existence of God. It is one thing to tolerate many forms of it and quite another to regard them as religion in the complete sense of the term.

IV. Common Element in Religions

This reminds us, therefore, of the fallacy very often committed by us in the attempt to define religion in terms of the element common in all forms of it. But definition is an attempt at the understanding of the nature of a thing which is fully revealed in what comes at the end of the whole process. In any one stage of it, therefore, we cannot reasonably expect religion to express itself in its true character or real essence. The practice, therefore, of defining religion in terms of the element common to all forms of it must bring it down to its lowest form in which its nature cannot be said to be revealed at all. The definition of religion must not be understood to fall in the same species as that of other objects which are not near to life and in

which the process of development is not at work. Any attempt, therefore, to define such complex phenomena as religion and culture must guard itself against the dangers attending upon the common fallacy of explaining them by reducing them to their lowest terms. Things which are subject to a process of development are different from those in which it is not at all at work. Things for instance which are merely combinations of many elements, can certainly be defined in terms of the element common to them. A machine can be defined in such a way. In other sciences and disciplines also in which we are not concerned with that in which the process fulfils itself, this practice may be adopted for convenience. In mathematics and geometry or in logic, by means of the process of abstraction, we may define concepts and categories. We may define things in terms of their concepts by including in them what is common to the instances embraced in them. But certainly in those spheres in which the whole personality and life of man and his spiritual efforts are involved, we must be careful to guard ourselves against the drastic consequences following from such a procedure.

In those provinces of human knowledge in which there is a gradual and progressive evolution of human personality itself, the attempt to understand it by getting hold of that which is common in the highest and the lowest forms of it tends to reduce it to its most crude and primitive forms. But in order that we may arrive at a principle which provides an adequate explanation of the whole process, the lowest is to be defined and explained in terms of the highest: for it is the latter which casts light on the true nature of the former. Without doing injustice to the cultural development of man, we cannot reduce it to its lowest form. Instead, therefore, of trying to explain religion by reducing it to its crudest forms, we must look forward to that in which it matures and fulfils itself. That which comes first in the order of time cannot give a full explanation of the whole process. We have rather to look for a principle, the motive force which has been present in the whole process from the beginning to the

end and which, by making a number of transitions in the intervening stages, brings about its own fulfilment and realization.

Any definition of religion, therefore, which leaves out of account its most perfect form, must be rejected as being inadequate to its form and content. It cannot be said that there is no one principle at work from the beginning to the end of the whole process, as it is quite possible that although it is present therein and has been functioning, we are not conscious of it. Only after we are conscious of the whole process do we realise that it has been existent in it all through. Hence what we find in the most perfect form of religion cannot be said to be absent from the most primitive form of it. Our failure to recognise this element leads us to think that religion perhaps is understandable not in terms of that which is the fulfilment of the whole process, but rather by reference to that which is common to all stages and forms.

Think, for example, of the development of language. Man has been making use of language from the very beginnings of civilisation. The principles of language which later analysis and reflection on its nature have revealed to man have been already present in it, trying always to manifest themselves. When we discover these principles of language and systematise them into what we call a grammar of it, it is not that something has been added to the language from outside. The principles of grammar are only the outcome of an analysis of the elements and factors already at work in them, which we systematise afterwards. A satisfactory study of the development of language, therefore, is possible only by reference to these principles and elements present all through.

Similar is the case with the principles of social institutions and political organisations which constitute what we call sociology or politics. These principles have already been there, so that they require a good deal of reflection and analysis to

unfold them. Thus, religion itself may be thought to be working out the full implications of what is involved even in the crudest and most primitive forms of it. A developing or a growing process, religion can be rendered intelligible only by reference to that in which it perfects and completes itself. We cannot understand what man is by tracing him back to the protoplasm or the child. What a full man is or what his essential character is, can only be obscurely revealed in the child or the protoplasm. Development is not the repetition of the same sets of events or facts, so that we can define anything by fixing our eyes upon these facts which have regularly repeated themselves. We cannot understand the child in terms of the protoplasm. It is only full manhood that is the real definition of the child. But since the process of development expresses itself in a number of transitional stages, we may, for the sake of convenience, look backwards, but this method cannot give us a clue to the intelligibility of the manner or the way in which it can complete itself.

The practice of excluding from religion those psychical characteristics of it which demarcate it from all other interests that are secular and non-religious, must be abandoned, because thereby we notice only that which cannot be called religious in the true sense of the term. Religion, further, is inextricably bound up with the psychological development of man which is revealed in a number of transitional stages. Hence, the method of defining religion by tracing it back to its simplest forms will result in depriving it of its distinctive features or character. It will also lead to such misunderstandings and misconceptions respecting human nature as can by no means be remedied. This habit, far from giving us a clue to the understanding of religion, rather explains it away. Following this method, man is reduced to consciousness and consciousness itself becomes nothing but nutrition, and when we try to know him, he becomes nothing but a plant. Therefore, if it is self-consciousness and full manhood that alone can enable

us to understand what man and his true character are, then it follows that religion also can be explained and understood by taking into account that which is the most perfect form of it in which the psychological development of man also finds its fulfilment and perfection. Therefore, it is not the *summum genus* or the lowest common denominator, but rather that motive force, that principle which has been present in all forms of it, that can supply us with a method adequate to the task facing us. We have accordingly to ask what the highest form is in which religion reveals itself. What are those characteristic features which express the highest psychological development of man and are also involved in religion which is one single spiritual process passing through so many stages from the very beginning of civilisation?

V. Theism as the Most Perfect Form of Religion

In the foregoing section we have tried to lay emphasis on the fact that religion as a specific, autonomous and at the same time an all-comprehensive pre-occupation of man is understandable by reference to the element of the Transcendent in it. The Transcendent or the Supernatural is a principle different both from the spatio-temporal order and from the human order. Transcendence is the principle of difference, and any form of religion which reduces it to an immanent category or brings it down to the level of man or interprets it only in terms of the ideal possibilities of man, the imaginable summits of human perfection, is, in effect, an emphatic denial of what religion stands for.

At the present time, we hear many voices in favour of such a view. It is no doubt true that the consummation of ideal human perfection forms part of the content of religion and, in this sense, that form of it which concentrates on it deserves that title only as a measure of concession and in the sense that it includes something at least which is not irrelevant to it. But from this the conception of religion which emphasises the

element of transcendence in it can by no means be compromised to include within its scope those forms of it which in this sense cannot be called religion at all.

It is pointless to raise the question of the presence of this Transcendent Principle in the world and in human life. We have called attention to the fact that the Infinite is not unfamiliar to us. Our experience is itself of a nature that it cannot be understood but for its reference to something on which it depends and in terms of which alone it can be explained. There is absolutely no basis for the pedestrian assertion that the Transcendent is not known to us. In fact, we can be ignorant only of that of which we have some knowledge. It cannot, therefore, be urged that the Transcendent is only an arbitrary idea that does not at all concern us.

The world is not something in which we merely exist, but it is something which forces us as rational beings to enquire into its nature and constitution; and as a precondition of the knowledge of it, we are required also to enquire into the conditions and circumstances which lead to our apprehension of it. What this most obvious form of reality is to us, we are able to know only when we enquire into the conditions of its knowledge. The vulgar may consider the objective world to be sufficient in itself, but difficulties and hardships which frustrate man's efforts, make him raise questions as to its nature and constitution and the conditions that render its knowledge possible. But as soon as reflection starts, we find ourselves confronted by the Transcendent which, therefore, is not absolutely unknown to us. Philosophy does not create belief in the existence of this Transcendent Supernatural Principle; it only makes us clearly conscious of it after we ponder over that which confronts us in all moments of our existence. The Transcendent is thus embedded in the very structure of human experience. This is why Indian *Vedantic* teachers have violently protested against the practice of proving the existence of God syllogistically. *Brahman*

or the Transcendent is constantly present with us, so that we can not escape His presence and the influence of His power. Philosophy has only to make our knowledge of God or the Transcendent a little more systematic, conscious and consistent than what it has been so far.

The difficulty concerning the active presence of God invades our believing mind only so long as we do not take the trouble of thinking about the conditions of the knowledge of the world. But when we try to question or analyse, examining our experience and trace out the ultimate conditions which render it possible, we inevitably fall back upon a principle of unity without which our experience of anything cannot be a harmonious, integrated whole. Analysis of the nature and the conditions of experience makes it indubitably certain that everything that we know is a part or a factor in one experience or is a component of the experience of one world. This world, comprising apparently irreconcilable, diverse elements in it, is doubtless an organic whole, because all parts of it are interrelated in such a way that we fail to understand it adequately when its constituent elements are abstracted from one another. The very fact however, that the human mind is able to know it—and it knows it because it is a network of multiple relations, corresponding to the categories and concepts of the human mind—is clear evidence of its rational character governed by a Supreme Intelligence behind it. That there is consequently a principle of unity immanent both in the universe outside and in each one of us is an undisputed fact to which attention has been called so frequently by the *Upaniṣads* in the East and by Kant and his successors in the West.

The immortal lesson of the Indian and Western idealistic teaching in this connection is the ineluctable and inescapable presence of this principle of unity both within the personality of man and in the mechanism of Nature. The multiplicity and diversity of the universe is not the denial of the existence of that

Transcendent Principle of unity in it, because, in spite of its differences, it is characterised by continuity and self-consistency and intelligibility. The universe is a self-consistent and intelligible system, which means that it expresses and manifests in all forms of it a principle of unity which no doubt escapes us only so long as we do not subject its knowledge to a critical analysis and understanding. So, when we look at the world theoretically, from the standpoint of our knowledge of it, and with a view to probing into the conditions that render its knowledge possible, we cannot escape the recognition of some explanatory principle behind it which is the source of its continuity, consistency and intelligibility.

But it is not from mere theoretical consistency that we are led to acknowledge its existence and realise its presence. Our experience bears unquestioned testimony to the fact that even our emotional and practical life demands the existence of such a principle of unity. A principle which is spiritual in the true sense of the term meets the demands not only of the enquiring intellect, but also of the felt needs of all our human desires, emotions and feelings. There is no meaning in postulating a spiritual principle for religious consciousness which only intelligence can understand, but which does not meet the needs of our emotional and practical life. That which we take to be spiritual in the true sense of the term, not only silences our enquiries, but also brings about consistency and harmony in our emotional and practical life. All these interests are called important, and nothing which falls short of being adequate to any of these aspects of our experience can be spiritual in the true sense of the term. The *Upaniṣads*, in recognition of this inevitable requirement of human nature, do not merely feel impelled to believe in the Infinite or *Brahman* as something vague and indefinite, but as one whose conception is and who is spiritual in character possessing a personality characterised by intelligence, feeling and will. They are not tired of emphasising that *Brahman* possesses *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* as three chief marks of His being.

Evidently, the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads*, in thus characterising *Brahman*, insist that *Brahman* is not an object merely of theoretical enquiry and investigation but also that which can put an end to all our intellectual riddles and confusions and introduce harmony into our emotional and practical life. The seers of the *Upaniṣads* have the unmistakable experience of the presence in their consciousness of a being who permeates and pervades our life through and through, gives a sense of purpose and direction to our will, brings about integration and harmony in our emotions and passions, lifts us above the evanescent, transitory and finite ends and values of life, and impels us always to abide permanently in the eternal in which alone we can find everlasting peace and felicity.

It is just to this feeling that St. Augustine gave triumphant utterance. "Thou hast created us for thyself and our heart cannot be quieted till it may find repose in Thee".⁴¹

"As birds open their beaks to be fed," says Homer, "because they are hungry, men open their hearts and minds, because they are hungry, because they hunger and thirst after God, because they want to be fed."

Religion is a conscious relation of man to that Supreme Centre of intelligence and will which permeates and pervades every side of our being, our entire intellectual, moral and spiritual life. "The setting of religious knowledge is a total life of experience, a sometimes dark, sometimes illuminated meeting of a 'Thou', a receiving, responding, contemplating questioning, doubting, affirming, rejecting, assenting, resisting, an agony and joy of involvement. No words are adequate to its complexity, for it is human life in infinite engagements, and each biography has its own individual story. What is important to recognize now is that religious 'knowledge' is but one of the

41. Max Muller, *Anthropological Religion*, p. 394.

functions or facets of religious life, affecting and affected by all of it."⁴²

A Being, which we are thus obliged to acknowledge as the source of the highest fulfilment of man, cannot be impersonal and identified with mere law, substance or force. The question, in our opinion, of the idealistic interpretation of reality, is not merely one of thinking whether there is at the root of the universe some principle regulating and governing objects and phenomena within it, but whether such a principle is impersonal or personal: because if it is the former, then howsoever much one may argue in support of such a doctrine, it amounts, in the ultimate analysis, to a position not different from mechanistic materialism. It is not our present concern at this stage of our argument to defend the doctrine of personality as the character and essence of God at the root of the universe and as permeating and pervading human personality. It will occupy our attention in a further development of our argument in the course of these lectures. For the present, however, we must bear in mind that the very idea of religion is inconceivable without thinking, first of all, of the Supreme Centre of intelligence, power and will behind Nature and history, and secondly, without attributing personality to such a being. If religion does not contain this element, it will be hardly distinguishable from ethics.

VI. *Can there be a Religion without God?*

But at this point we have to face an objection to our argument that religions like Buddhism do not give any evidence of belief in God. The status of religion, however, cannot be denied to Buddhism. Then there is also the religion of Jainism, which does not consider God to be an inseparable component in the system of its beliefs. Then, again, the religious history of

42. Louis Arnaud Reid, *Ways of Knowledge and Experience*, p. 168, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1962.

mankind shows many forms of religion in which there is no awareness of God; nor any acknowledgement of any objective existence spiritual in character. Early religions are indications of man's feeling of adoration of a mere idol or a stock or stone or even of ancestors and fetishes. None of these can be designated by the name of God. It may be said in reply to these objections that religious consciousness does not express itself in the first instance in a clear consciousness of the existence of God. What is first in the order of Nature is last in the order of time. It is not always necessary that we possess a clear and conscious knowledge of all things we come across. We can only say that in these stages of the evolution of religious consciousness, our belief in God is just an unconscious one and does not take a definite form. Instead of saying that there is no evidence of a clear consciousness of the existence of God in them, we should rather say that our knowledge or understanding has not at such stages of the evolution of our mental life come to a point where its obscure cognition can be expected to become clear and definite.

It is common knowledge that the human mind is such that in the early beginnings of the manner in which it is able to know things, it cannot but fix its attention only on the outward appearance of things. In the first movement of the evolution of his mental life, man can think only of what is revealed to him through the senses as real. Things must appear to him in their objective form, and man is bound consequently to look outwards upon whatever surrounds him. Man cannot turn back upon himself and look inwards until he looks outwards. Unless, in the course of his contact with the outward appearance of things, on certain critical occasions he feels the necessity of enquiring into how at all he knows them, and what the conditions of his knowledge of them are, he cannot turn inwards. But as soon as he becomes reflective and does not merely passively receive sensations but recognises the existence of a principle which is the source of the organisation of the sense-manifold into definite

objects, he turns back upon himself and refuses to believe in the sole reality of the external world. He begins to look into his own self and thinks that it is the only principle of explanation of all things.

As religion, therefore, passes from the stage of the recognition of the Infinite in the world outside to that of its perception in the inner world, in the self of man, the Infinite is apprehended as something subjective, and then the very self of man is raised to the status of the Infinite. Buddhism is a stage of religion which exemplifies the perception of the Infinite in the self of man. The same may be said to be true of Jainism also. All religions thus may be taken to be but stages in the development of one process and, if what follows is the explanation of what precedes, we must try to understand and define even these forms of religion by taking into account later developments. The tendency to deny the existence of God in the early ethical religion of Buddhism met with its inevitable nemesis in the very adoration of the Buddha himself as God.

Arnold J. Toynbee says: "The breath was hardly out of the Buddha's body before his disciples were disputing over the possession of his mortal remains with a view to treasuring as sacred relics these material debris of a soul that had successfully remerged itself in *Nirvana*; and the thus beatified human founder of the Buddhist Community had been transfigured by Hinayanian piety into a superhuman being long before the historical personality of Siddhartha Gautama, the Sakya prince of the sub-Himalayan city-state of Kapilavastu, had been eclipsed, in the Mahayanian imagination, by other *avatars*, past and future, of an ever-recurrent Buddha, which better satisfied the human need for an epiphany of a personal God because they were untrammelled by intractable historical associations."⁴³

43. *A Study of History* TB, p. 732, Oxford University Press, London, 1963

Jainism adores Mahāvira himself as God, because all perfections are supposed to be centred and fully realised in him. So God is worshipped and adored in the form of Mahāvira. Jainism does not deny the existence of minor gods, nor does it even dispute the reality of the supernatural world. We do not mean to say, however, that Jainism can be said to be a theistic religion in the complete sense of the term, like Christianity or Vaiṣṇavism. It is only claimed that there is at least a vague and obscure consciousness of the Infinite in Jainism which we designate by the name of God. Buddhism has definitely developed now into a theistic form of religion, as exemplified in the Mahāyāna form of it. Primitive religion may rest only on a vague idea of some force or power present in the universe over which man has no control. The transcendent principle which in our definition of religion is what man cannot escape from, does not seem to be an element in this form of religion. The primitive man cannot, therefore, be said to be conscious of God in the sense of the term defined by us, which stands for the Supreme Power of Intelligence and Will in whom are apprehended all things and who is the explanation of both Nature and history. But since even the primitive man has powers of thinking and as his mental life develops, he must reflect upon himself and upon the world and thus distinguish the one from the other. It is in his knowledge of both distinction and relation by the constant intercourse of both himself and the world outside him, that his mental life can be said to grow and attain a certain height of maturity. In his matured reflection, it is impossible for him not to be affected by the presence of the infinite power and will, the principle of unity of all things and thinking present in the universe. It is then that his vague consciousness of the Infinite becomes clear and conscious.

That which he previously apprehended in the form of an object external to him and that which he feared and dreaded becomes now an object of love, worship, adoration and surrender. We have suggested already that even primitive

religion contains the transcendent principle and designates it by so many names. That therefore God, in whatever primitive form He may be apprehended, does not affect the life of the primitive man and that he does not possess at least a vague or obscure consciousness of Him, cannot be admitted. But even if we do not accept this position, we have at least to acknowledge that reflection and meditation on the relation between himself and the world outside him cannot but make him believe in the existence of God from whose influence and power he cannot escape. The Psalmist says: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me: If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not for thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" 44

Therefore, in our attempt to search for a suitable definition of religion, we are obliged to admit that we cannot dispense with the idea of God, because even though for want of our clear consciousness of Him, we may deny His existence in many forms of it, yet reflection upon the conditions of knowledge cannot but make us believe in God as an inseparable element in, rather, the very foundation or basis of the religious consciousness. Religious consciousness as belief in the existence of God is undoubtedly what is embedded in the very intellectual, moral and spiritual constitution of the human mind.

The question whether there is God or not is the question whether human experience is self-explanatory, whether it can be understood only in terms of immanent categories. If human experience is such as can be adequately and consistently

understood without a transcendent principle, then, as a matter of fact, belief in the existence of God can be said to be irrational and not warranted by facts. But as man is self-conscious and he applies his reason to his experience, he cannot but raise questions concerning the conditions which make it possible. Closer examination leads irresistibly to the recognition of an ultimate principle for the explanation of human experience.

It is evident that, as Kant pointed out, unless there are certain concepts or universals, the categories of the understanding and the forms of sensibility, the world presented to us cannot be understood by us. It is also true that these categories are forms of the real; they are not created by us. There may be different names for these categories in different languages, but their meaning is one and the same: and whenever knowledge of things takes place, these categories are absolutely indispensable. In other words, since objects given in space and time are not intelligible by themselves, they have reference to the resources which contain these principles. The fact that they can be understood and explained only in terms of these categories and concepts leads us inevitably to think that the world is an expression of mind. It cannot be the product of mere chance. Hence, from the facts given us, we are reasonably conducted to belief in the existence of the ultimate principle which removes all gaps in our knowledge.

Natural theology does not claim to give us direct knowledge or a vision of God. Seers and prophets and religious geniuses in all religions repeatedly remind us that God is the Being different from all other objects and that our knowledge of Him is so unique that it bears no resemblance to other forms of knowledge.

There has been a good deal of question-begging on this subject in recent times, since a group of philosophers have argued that all questions regarding God and sentences in which the word 'God' occurs are meaningless, because they cannot be

verified by sense-experience. But no religious thinker, prophet or seer has ever proclaimed the existence of God to be a demonstrable fact. God belongs to an order of existence which is totally different from the order of the existence of other things, and there is no point in saying that the propositions containing the word 'God' are meaningless, because God is not a fact like other facts of the empirical order. Even in ordinary forms of knowledge we are required to concentrate all our resources on the object we desire to know.

It has been emphasised from the very beginning of the religious history of mankind that God is not a demonstrable reality, but rather one who has to be experienced in the citadel of one's own heart. There are extra-ordinary methods recommended for the knowledge of extra-ordinary objects, and just because the experience of God cannot be classed with the experience of other objects, we cannot say that religious propositions or statements are meaningless. The function of natural theology, therefore, is only to show whether belief in the existence of God is a reasonable one, or whether we can argue from the natural order to the supernatural order, from the finite to the infinite, from the world of necessity to the world of freedom and so forth. Human experience, when it is examined in all its details, is found to rest on a transcendent principle which is akin to the human mind. As intelligence is revealed in the order and system of the world, we have to start only with a mind that is omniscient and is consequently the source of order or purpose in the world. Those who outright reject the belief in the existence of God must face this question, whether there is order or system in the world or not. Many are in the habit of saying that the world is a product of mere chance, but it is as ridiculous to say that all these are mere chance occurrences as to hold that the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet can of themselves so combine together as to produce *Hamlet*. Hence, howsoever agnostic and sceptic one may be, one cannot pass over the evident fact of order and system in the world.

But order and system are themselves not the arrangements of the world itself. The world as a cosmos refers itself back to a transcendent principle as its explanation. The explanation of the world cannot be found within the world itself. Whether one likes it or not, one has to believe in the reality of a principle adequate to make the world intelligible, in so far as one cannot question the existence of order and system in the world. It is immaterial what name one gives to it, so long as the meaning assigned to it by the believer and the unbeliever is one and the same, and the data also from which they start are quite the same. Hence, it has to be acknowledged that mere immanent categories cannot explain our varied experiences and also the world of space and time. Nature, in other words, cannot be understood without supernature, matter without mind, the finite without the Infinite. The finite and the Infinite, nature and supernature are always given together in our experience, and it only requires a little of our reason to see how one of them is not understandable without the other. As we analyze our experience, we find that we do not know the finite without the Infinite. The facts themselves which are given us and which we try to understand and systematize cannot be apprehended unless we apprehend the ultimate principle as well. It is precisely this fact that can be said to be the contribution of the great German philosopher, Kant.

Although, admittedly, Kant was an agnostic, he pointed out that without postulating God, freedom and immortality, we are not able to know the true nature of human experience, because they are necessarily involved in it. It is true that he said that reason is not competent to give us any knowledge of these supernatural principles. But he qualified his agnostic conclusions by pointing to moral experience in which is to be found a clear demonstration of man's supernatural destiny. He exhorts us, in other words, to find the evidence of God in our moral experience. Thus, there can be no denying the fact that without the transcendent principle, the

world, given in space and time, and human experience cannot be understood. By the necessities of our thought, we are compelled to believe in the existence of God; and religious experience is fundamentally the experience of God. Short of the existence of God, religion can mean anything else, but certainly it cannot mean that which alone gives it its distinctive status and existence.

This warning is necessary, because we are accustomed to identify religion with mere moral experience or even a policy of action or mere commitment to anything. But distinction between the sacred and the profane is crucial to the understanding of the true nature of religion. Just because there are many elements and components in religion, the attempt to identify the complex content of it with any one of them is to commit the mistake of identifying a part with the whole. Morality or commitment is, no doubt, a part of religion, but mere morality cannot be religion. There is what we call the feeling of the numinous involved in religion; and moral experience or performance of duty has little of the numinous in it. The acknowledgment of the existence of the numinous in the particular feeling designated as religious, marks religion off from all other secular occupations and activities of the human mind. Morality is an essential component of religion and is very near to it. But morality does not completely exhaust the content of religion. Therefore, just because morality is very near to religion, we cannot say that religion is nothing more than morality.

Similarly, according to the interpretation we have given of religion, there is a confrontation of the subject with something other than it. Religion, that is to say, is a subject-object relationship. It cannot be assimilated to any process which is concerned merely with the unfoldment of the possibilities of man. Religion is the process which brings to light and perfects the creative possibilities of man. But it is not merely the

fulfilment of these possibilities of man that can be said to constitute the total content of religion. There are in man not only such possibilities as can be called human: but more important than them, there are feelings of devotion, worship, adoration and surrender which are directed to something other than him. If these feelings are there in him and form the very texture of his psychological experience, how can we explain them except by referring them to the object in relation to which alone they can be understood by us? Therefore, it must be admitted that religion is not concerned only with the perfection of the possibilities of man. Can religion in that sense be taken to be anything better than humanism? Religion is not circumscribed in the narrow circle of the subject. There is an object as well, and religion can be said to be the expression of relations between the subject and the object.

VII. Reality in Religion is Trans-human and Uniquely Personal

We have so far focussed attention on the necessity of the object in religion, on the necessity of a transcendent principle, the existence of the Universal Mind or God who is the necessary implication of the analysis of human experience. We have considered the treatment of this element as a safeguard against the mistaken assimilation of religion to anything purely human or secular. Religion, no doubt, is all-comprehensive in nature and comprises the entire human experience and gives a new meaning to it. This is because of the fact that it is not concerned only with the human. It gives meaning to man or to Nature because its roots lie elsewhere than in merely the human or the natural. There are religions whose object is to bring to their fulfilment the creative possibilities of man. It must frankly be admitted that many of the Eastern religions, at least in their earliest forms, Theravāda Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism and so on, for example, paid attention to the perfection of human character. Religion in its earlier forms thus appears to have aimed at the

attainment a certain degree of integration, harmony and peace in life. We might say that religion, interpreted in these terms, might very well be assimilated to the Jungian version of it which treats it as concerned with an onrush from the being of man himself

In the account of the nature of religion given above, we have tried to establish that religion cannot be exhausted in what is merely human or secular. There is nothing to prevent religion, a total attitude to a total Reality as it is, from casting its shadow on and transforming the secular and the human. But certainly this function is a direct consequence of its nature and is not the total content of it. In all such discussions of religion, we have to start from above, from the top and not from the bottom. This is what is involved in the nature of religion and distinguishes it from everything secular and human. For God to be is to be transcendent.

The transcendence of God is the starting point of religion because, without the recognition of the ontological distinction and difference of God from everything else, we are completely unable to explain the nature of anything. Only the transcendent can be immanent in that which it transcends. The very contradictions of a purely human element, as the history of some religions shows, have resulted in giving them a form and content not materially different from those of theism. This is a historical commonplace in modern Jainism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. The purely human or the ethical, as the very necessity of the logic of religion shows, must pass into something transcendent and superhuman. It is immaterial what name is given to the ultimate principle, provided all our thoughts, emotions and feelings are centred on it and it is taken to be the ultimate and the source of order, system and purpose in whatever we know and experience.

But this is only one side of the matter. We need to fix our attention on another equally important aspect of religion, to

consider religion from the point of view of both the object and the subject. There is a reality given in religion with which we are confronted. But we need also to emphasise the method and the manner of our approach of access into or our confrontation with Reality. Religion is not departmental; it is the ultimate concern of man to that which is ultimate. Knowledge of God embraces the entire human personality and transforms all our thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions. Our knowledge of God must be held to be totally different from our knowledge of all other things. Since God is unique, our knowledge of Him must also be unique.

In this connection, we must remember that knowledge in religion is not the same as knowledge in science. In the course of the observation or experiment respecting a particular physical object, we have to keep our personality apart. The scientist is required to keep his powers of perception aside in order that he may arrive at his conclusions which are precise, objective and acceptable to all. This is a kind of knowledge which is completely free from the contaminating influences that our emotions and actions can exercise on the process of our knowledge.

The personality of man does not count at all. We might say knowledge in science is exemplified in what is nowadays called the *I-It* relation. The more we keep our personality aside and the more our knowledge is free from or untouched by emotion, the nearer we are to truth. The error, therefore, against which we have to guard ourselves is that of assimilating religious knowledge to the level of scientific knowledge.

Religious knowledge can by no means be of the same nature as scientific knowledge. This does not mean that it has no objectivity, because objectivity also is attainable only in a community and there is a community of seers and prophets who testify to the genuineness of religious experience.

Religious knowledge is no less objective than scientific knowledge: only its objectivity is of a different order, because the object with which it is confronted is unique and different from all the objects with which the scientist deals. In other words, knowledge in science may be said to be the result exclusively of our intellectual approach to the object, in which the more passive and detached we are in our feelings and emotions, the nearer we are to truth. But religion is not mere cognition, mere knowledge. The object with which religion is concerned is not physical or natural. We would have hardly anything to do with religious knowledge, if it were concerned with an object of the same order as the objects given in space and time. In religion, we are rather concerned with a person. The transcendent principle taken by us to be the ultimate source and centre of all things, the Alpha and the Omega point of all objects, is a person. Hence, knowledge of God is not of the form of the *I-It* relationship. It is of the form of *I-Thou* relationship.

In so far as religion is a theory of life and is based on a metaphysic or a doctrine of reality, resulting from a critical analysis and understanding of human experience, the role that reason plays in it cannot be underestimated. Belief in God is not belief in a chimera. It has a factual basis because, although in the first instance it is something which affects man unconsciously when he observes the vast expanse of the sky above and the plains and mountains below, yet when he reflects upon how he knows them and on the many kindred problems that confront him, he is led to the conclusion that God as the Supreme Mind alone can be the final answer to all his theoretical questions and enigmas that arise from his intercourse with the world. But religion is not mere information; it is orientation too. If it were mere information, there would be nothing to distinguish it from science. It would have nothing to do with human personality which has always to be kept aside in the course of any attempt directed to an objective knowledge of things given in the spatio-temporal order.

VIII. Reason is Involved in Religion

It will not be quite a correct estimate of the religious consciousness to hold that man is religious only because he is self-conscious or because he is merely intellectual. It would be more correct to say that man is rational and religion is a manifestation of his reason. Intellect is only a part of the exercise of his reason. Knowledge expresses itself more in emotions and action than in the powers of thinking, analysis, interpretation and understanding. And when it does so, it makes man transcend the opposition of mind and matter, the subject and the object, to find their unity in a higher synthesis. But religion is not purely an intellectual preoccupation. It is not for intellectual equipment, scholarship, powers of keen analysis and keen understanding that we respect a religious man. The high esteem and honour the religious man commands are due mainly to the kind of man he is, that is to say, the harmonious and balanced perfection of all his mental and spiritual powers which constitute his personality. If, therefore, it were asked to which specific region or faculty of the mind religion belongs, the answer would be that it is certainly an absurd question because it is put in such a manner that it cannot be answered at all. For some time, indeed, the philosophers in the West were accustomed to interpret it merely in terms of the discursive intellect. But ever since Freud and his colleagues in the latter half of the 19th century, explored the unconscious region of the mind, this has been abandoned. A mere intellectual interpretation of religious consciousness has now become outmoded.

The anthropological interpretation of religion has now put forward the view that religion arose from questions concerning the emotional and practical sides of human experience rather than from those concerning the origin of the world. Long before man began to think about himself and about the world, he had already accepted the existence of God as the sovereign, supernatural power pervading all the events and phenomena of Nature

and it can be said that his belief in God was anchored in his religious experience and it was not the outcome of an attempt on his part at a reflective exercise of his reason. The relationship established between him and Nature outside and God immanent in Nature was personal rather than impersonal. Consequently, this demanded from man something more in addition to his efforts for understanding them, evoking from him an emotional response in the form of the performance of sacrifices and the observance of rituals. This is precisely the meaning or purport of the contention that religion cannot be reduced to the *I-It* relationship, but rather to the *I-Thou* relationship, because the relation between God and man is a relation between persons, a dialogue, a confrontation between man and God which involves a subject at one end and an object at the other end of the relationship. All religious relationships, therefore, are personal. The dialogue or intercourse with God requires the involvement of the whole personality; it needs complete transfiguration of his whole mind and heart and spirit. God has to be adored with our whole mind and spirit, and this calls for a new orientation in our feeling and behaviour. We are not to be merely passive and receptive, but have to be emotional and active as well. Knowledge, feeling and action can only be separated in thought; but in actual existence they interpenetrate one another; and it is their indissoluble organisation that makes up the entire furniture of the mind. Emotions and actions also are never possible without knowledge. Our emotions of love or hatred, attraction or repulsion for a person is in proportion as our knowledge of him is superficial or close and intimate. Therefore, if the roots of religion are sunk deep in our feelings, emotions and actions, intellectual powers may not be relevant to faith. One can be deeply religious and profoundly susceptible to spiritual influences even though inferior in intellectual culture. Piety is not necessarily the consequence of knowledge and intelligence. Religious consciousness is not merely intellectual; it does not stop short with mere knowledge of God or of some supernatural principle behind

the flux of events. The ultimate principle with which religion is concerned calls for a full participation of the human personality in all its being.

IX. Religious Consciousness, Practical Activity and Feeling

Emphasis on any one element of the religious consciousness is the source of so many misconceptions which have served to strip religion of its true nature and essence. In India, for instance, it was identified by the *Mīmāṃsakas* with mere practical activity, while the pragmatists in the West deprived it of its intellectual basis and anchorage and tried to judge its value only in terms of its impact on conduct and behaviour, or from the point of view of its power to enable us to achieve only the immanent values of peace, happiness, integration and harmony. It is against this mistake of the inveterate tendency to identify religion with mere rituals and sacrifices that the *Bhagavadgītā* can be said to be a sustained and effective warning. It has much to say in this connection, because it calls attention over and over again to our emotions and feelings, as a mere cold, abstract and unemotional approach to the Divine cannot be of any use to us. The *Gītā* lays supreme emphasis on our inward motives and principles of which our outward behaviour is an expression. These give a certain colour and complexion to man's outward behaviour, but are not intellectual. Religious consciousness is basically marked by our feeling of obligation towards and the affirmation of the sense of our dependence on the sovereign power and will of God and the experience of awe, reverence and unfathomable mystery in the presence of that which for us is ultimate both in reality and value. Hence religion can be said to exhaust its content neither in mere philosophical intelligence, nor in external secular achievements. Thought or knowledge is nothing more than veering around an object looking at it from outside and not penetrating into its depth. By feeling and emotion, we come nearer to God. All the same He is distinct from us. If religion

is what minimises or rather dissolves the distance between God and man, if its destiny is nothing short of the absorption of the self in God, it cannot achieve its purpose and realise its goal or destiny. The otherness or transcendence of God is the source of all feeling that is typically religious. It is by feeling that we enter into the very heart of the object and are able to overcome its externality. Short of feeling, our knowledge of the object cannot overcome its distance from us. It will continue to be something foreign and stubborn, impinging on us from outside in the form of stern, ruthless fate.

Religious consciousness, therefore, is personal knowledge. Knowledge without feeling is not religion. Whitehead says: "In considering the history of ideas, I maintain that the notion of mere knowledge is a high abstraction which we should dismiss from our minds. Knowledge is always accompanied with accessories of emotion and purpose."⁴⁵ Many Western thinkers have come to recognize the various relativities that we have detected and the decisive role among them of interested valuation. One such thinker is Max Scheler who says: "Every mode of intellectual apprehension of the nature of an object presupposes the presence of an emotional valuation of that object".⁴⁶

Knowledge without feeling cannot enable us to achieve anything in the sphere of religion. It is a serious mistake, therefore, to interpret religious consciousness by depriving the element of knowledge in it of all feeling which is helpful in bringing God nearer to us.

Feelings and emotions which form part of our knowledge of God or religious consciousness are not unconscious and blind,

45. *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 198.

46. Quoted in E. A. Burt, *In Search of Philosophic Understanding*, p. 337.

but are rather more intimate ways of knowing the Deity. They have cognitive value. Just because the human mind is an organism and all its functions are interpenetrating, a hard-and-fast distinction among the three functions of knowledge, feeling and action which makes them exclusive of one another is not warranted by our experience: "All feeling means to instate some experience which is essentially cognitive: it is idea-apart-from-its-object tending to become idea-in-presence-of-its-object, which is cognizance, or experimental knowledge."⁴⁷ Feeling or emotion supplements the deficiency and incapacity of mere thought or knowledge. As Bradley puts it: "It is only by misunderstanding that we find difficulty in taking thought to be something less than reality."⁴⁸

"Truth belongs to existence, but it does not as such exist."
 "It is a character which indeed reality possesses, but a character which, as truth and as ideal, has been set loose from existence; and it is never rejoined to it in such a way as to come together singly and make fact. Hence truth shows a dissection, and never an actual life"⁴⁹ "Our principles may be true, but they are not reality."⁵⁰

Thought or knowledge may give us truth, but thought or knowledge is not reality. Thought is not existence. in the words of Lotze: "The multitude of those who maintain that they experience that which is highest in the world, perfectly intellectuallly, in faith, in feeling, in presentiment, in inspiration yet acknowledge that they do not possess it in

47. W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p 68, Yale University Press, 1963.

48. Quoted in *The Philosophy of Lotze*, p. 48, James Maclehose and Sons, Glasgow, 1895.

49. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 167.

50. Bradley, *Principle of Logic*, p. 533.

knowledge". It is a grave error "to look upon knowledge as the sole portal through which that which constitutes the essence of real existence can enter into connection with the mind..... Intellectual life is more than thought."⁵¹ Moreover: "Thought, in a word, is only a single part, or element, or faculty of mind, occupying a restricted place amongst several others, which co-operate with it in the production of the contents of our intelligent life".⁵²

As it is not an impersonal knowledge with which one is concerned in religion, the goal of which is one's communion with the Supreme Personal Mind, the divine knowledge of God must have in it the dominating influence of feeling. God is not an object. He is the spirit abiding in the citadel of the heart of man. This universal testimony is itself the guarantee of the assurances that man receives of the felicity and fulfilment with which he is blessed in his intercourse with God. It is for the purpose of suggesting that God is not an object of intellectual knowledge, but has to be cognized in our feelings and emotions, which can give us a more intimate knowledge of Him, that religious insight has always borne witness to the heart of man as the abode of God. This also explains why many have been able, without any intellectual culture, to claim the closest and most intimate knowledge of God. If God is accessible to all alike, religion cannot be understood to be the monopoly of only the most sophisticated, educated, academic, intelligent men. All this, therefore, shows how it is an utterly misleading conception of religion to confine it in the narrow circle of thought or reason. Feeling or emotion is no less characteristic of religion than thought or reason.

51. Lotze, *op. cit.* pp. 49-50,

52. *Op. cit.* p. 50.

X. Feeling, Cognition and Will

The emphasis on feeling may lead to another misconception. To say that religious consciousness is expressed by characteristic feelings is not to exclude the functions of intelligence and will in man's knowledge of God. For feeling does not exclude the element of thought or reason in it, and has cognitive value. Since by feeling also we are able to know things, more so when we enter into communion with persons, it would certainly be unreasonable to hold that there is such a thing as a blind emotion directed to any object.

Feeling as an element in religious consciousness cannot exclude its expression in knowledge and will, because in the first place, there is no feeling without thought. "It is true that ideas apart from feelings do not work: but it is also true that a feeling does no work apart from its guiding idea. Though feeling is close to action, is incipient action, it is not without incipient idea: and as this idea becomes adequate, the working effectiveness of the feeling is not diminished, but enhanced" 53

Secondly, it is not possible for feeling without thought to enable us to know that this feeling is not of the ordinary kind, but that it is a religious feeling. Feeling without its definite character, without its connection with a particular sphere of human thought or activity, is a misnomer. We have so many varieties of feelings, and the difference in the variations of feelings arise from the fact that they involve the element of thought or knowledge in them. Feelings would have been indistinguishable from one another, if there were no thought in them. It is impossible for us to think that we can entertain feelings for an object or person not known to us. For our

53. *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 69.

feelings of love and hatred are directed to objects of which we command some knowledge without which we cannot love or hate them. Feeling as such, that is, feeling without the element of knowledge, is an utterly impossible concept even in ordinary spheres of human knowledge, not to speak of religious consciousness. As there are many kinds of feeling ranging from the rapture of the sensualist to the devout fervour of the saint, it cannot be gainsaid that feeling always involves an element of thought or knowledge. Discrimination is required to distinguish one feeling from another. Thought or knowledge alone can supply us with the criterion to judge the value of emotions. That which furnishes us with this standard of judgment and is the ground of discrimination between them must lie outside the sphere of feelings themselves.

Just as feelings need the assistance of thought or idea for distinguishing one another, they require a certain degree of stability to consolidate themselves into a permanent disposition of will or a sentiment. It is will that consolidates emotions and stabilizes them by transforming them into what is called a sentiment. It is will which gives feelings the form of a religious sentiment or permanent disposition. Feelings in their very nature are apt to fluctuate and pass from one object to another. But in religion we are not concerned with these fleeting feelings with their objects changing every moment. Religious consciousness involves the concentration and fixation of the whole personality on the object of religious devotion, surrender and worship, and requires the consolidation or stability of feelings effected by will. There is, therefore, no feeling without will which can carry any meaning in our relationship with God. It is these religious feelings and emotions which develop later into ideals and values of life which cannot be what they are, nor demand our allegiance, if will is not an inseparable element in them.

XI. Will and Belief

Belief also involves the element of will. Ideas or beliefs are directed to their respective objects for which they require the assistance of will. While there is no emotion, feeling or sentiment without will investing it with stability or a permanent character, belief also is not mere information regarding the nature of something. Particularly in religion it is nothing if it is not stable and permanent and does not get fixed on the object of religious devotion. If the ultimate in reality satisfies our whole being and is valued in a manner and to an extent no other objects can be valued, then it requires not only the cognitive but also the volitional element of consciousness. There is no belief without the assent given to it by the will. Belief is also an indication of the interest that we generally have in the object to which the belief refers. We do not believe in anything in which we have no interest whatsoever. Belief forms part of our purposes and interests as much as feelings and emotions do. As a matter of fact, feelings and emotions and interests in things other than God promote or frustrate our impulses that have initially contributed to our growing consciousness of the Deity. The desire to know is a subordinate element in the primitive stages of religious development. Religious consciousness expresses itself, in its initial confrontation with God, mainly in emotions and actions, followed of course, by the need to understand the object of worship only later.

William Temple quotes Whitehead as saying: "...indeed cognition itself is a late and specialised form of consciousness. First, there is the reaction of the organism to its environment; then this becomes consciousness, and (in one act with the emergence of consciousness) more highly unified." The feeler is the unity emergent from its own feelings; and feelings are the details of the process, intermediary between this unity and its many data. Consciousness first arises in its emotional form, not as knowledge nor as purpose, but as organic reaction become

aware of its significance in terms of pleasure and pain. "We perchance other actual entities more primitively by direct mediation of emotional tone, and only secondarily and waveringly by direct mediation of sense." But even so, the primitive consciousness is primarily objective in its reference. "The primitive form of physical experience is emotional—blind emotion—received as felt in another occasion and conformally appropriated as a subjective passion. In the language appropriate to the higher stages of experience, the primitive element is sympathy, that is, feeling the feeling in another and feeling conformally with another."⁵⁴

It is the value of the object, its capacity for the satisfaction of our needs, that really promotes any enquiry into its nature. The primitive mind hardly ever cared to know anything just for the sake of knowledge. Without practical value belief is bound to wither away. It is our purposes and interests that give our beliefs their actual forms and add to their value and significance. Beliefs, therefore, without our will cannot be supposed to have any meaning or value. Further, ideas which are of religious value not only become significant through the co-operation they receive from the will, but they also transform it and make it express what we believe through our attitudes.

XII. Thought in Religious Experience

Though thought is not so near religious experience as feeling is, it is a very important element in the development of religious consciousness. Our experience of God has to be generalised and made the common property of mankind like the propositions of science. But so long as religious experience is imprisoned in the private experience of the individual, it cannot be such a common possession, for which it needs the power of thought and ideas. It is in the form of myth and legend that

54. *Nature, Man and God*, pp. 123-24.

thought is first expressed. Religious experience is formulated, conceptualised and generalised into a number of doctrines as a result of the attempt to bring our ideas and thoughts to bear upon it. The doctrines thus get a universal form and are handed down from one generation to another.

But, as we cast our glance over the process of the evolution of religious ideas, we find also that they undergo considerable modification and transformation and are subject to new forms of statement in response to changing social needs; and this is possible because of the presence of the element of thought in religious experience. Without thought or ideas, therefore, our experiences of God cannot develop and acquire a universal character. It is thought that protects religious experiences from being hardened into superstitions, dogmas and morbid orthodoxy. In fact, religion is grounded in the metaphysics of man, inasmuch as the ideas regarding one's belief in God incorporate those concerning the nature and the structure of the world as well and man's place in it, which are the themes common to science and philosophy.

The more our religious experience is consistent with our growing physical and scientific interpretation of the world and human experience in all other fields, the more valuable a possession of mankind it tends to become. It is thought that gives permanent value to religious experience by making suitable adjustments. It is thought again that promotes religious practice. Religious ideas which are hostile to the scrutiny of thought exercised on them cannot have permanent value. After all, as rational beings, we want to understand what we believe; we cannot rest long in a state of confusion. Thought emancipates our consciousness of God from its initial obscurity and vagueness. It is thought that redeems religion from its tribal character and enables it to exercise tremendous power on mankind. It is the impact of thought or idea exercised on religion that helps us to see how the different religions can unite

and collaborate on certain fundamental principles by making us realise how there is much in religion that is of only local and regional significance and which, though valuable and effective in specific contexts and situations of an extremely narrow and limited range, cannot have any universal appeal. To assess the value of religion, we have to bear in mind the proportion in which it sets value on the role of intellect or thought.

XIII. Summing up

In attempting to define systematically what religion means and what is involved in the religious consciousness, we must always bear in mind that it is the total knowledge, the total orientation of man to the Supreme Reality that is the subject of any interpretation of religion. Feelings are also judged by the values which they seek to realize, and mere feelings themselves without the element of thought in them cannot be judged high or low. Moreover, as regards the knowledge of such a reality as God Himself who is infinite and universal, we cannot in our consciousness of Him appropriate to ourselves His infinitude and universality, if our apprehension of Him is devoid of the universal features characteristic of thought.

Feelings in themselves are so particular, individual and private that there is no universal element in them. But God is universal. The aspiration for communion with Him is the very *sine qua non* of the religious relationship. Without casting aside our private narrow self, we cannot enter into communion with God. But mere feeling which is particular and individual, cannot enable us to rise to the highest level of the feeling which is universal and which supersedes all narrow loyalties of mundane existence. These considerations teach us, by taking into account the nature of religious consciousness, that all the three elements of knowledge, feeling and action interpenetrate one another and overcome their respective deficiencies.

After so much discussion on the nature and content of religion, the task of defining religion conceptually may seem formidable. Religion is life itself and it is no less difficult to define religion than to define or bring life under a logical, conceptual formulation. However, after we have outlined the chief features of it, we can attempt a tentative definition which will be our master-key for our effective penetration into other dimensions of Rāmanuja's theistic philosophy of religion. Thus, the first point that we have tried to emphasize is that if religion is an autonomous activity of the human mind, different from mere ethics or morality, it is impossible without the recognition of the existence and reality of God.

The existence of many forms of religion in which belief in God is not an indispensable element does not contradict the cogency of our proceeding. The identification of one essential element in the complex structure of a whole with the complete notion of it is a common error. We can distinguish between religion from the point of view of all the norms that are fulfilled in it and the means that by way of preparation lead up to it, or make some element or other in it the sole content and explanation. If we recognize religion as an autonomous activity different from all other spheres of man's cultural life, the only point in which it can be distinguished from them is its recognition of a Personal Supreme Mind who creates, maintains and sustains the order of both Nature and history.

The very fact that, in any systematic formulation of our ideas respecting the Supreme Mind, we proceed from the contingent experience of the world and of history and we presuppose it to be the sole explanation of them, is an indisputable indirect proof against its identification with them. The idea of God cannot, therefore, be so downgraded as either to assimilate it to the transcendental perfection of the individual or identify Him with the temporal process or the world so that there is nothing left over other than the world which can be the object

of our religious experience. Only that kind of religious philosophy which seeks to defend theism as the doctrine of God and its relation to the world and man, can meet all our religious needs.

Thirdly, as the primary element in religion is the awareness or recognition of the existence of God distinct from Nature and history, religion comes to have meaning and value from the fact that it is part of the human experience which involves duality but not the dualism of the subject and the object. If religion has a metaphysics and, being cognitive in character, starts with the acknowledgment of the Supreme Mind, it cannot be reduced to the meagre and exiguous dimensions of man. We ascend from man up to God rather than descend from God down to man. No adequate explanation of religion can be given which altogether neglects or glosses over this ontological basis of religious belief.

Fourthly, deeper reflection on the nature and content of religious consciousness reveals that our knowledge of God encompasses our whole personality. Merely intellectual, emotional or voluntaristic treatment of the religious consciousness cannot do justice to its complex character. The consciousness of man is not an aggregate of disconnected faculties or powers, so that the many forms of its expression can be exclusive of one another. No serious thinker nowadays upholds the outdated doctrine of faculty psychology, according to which knowledge, feeling and action were regarded as separate from and exclusive of one another. Consciousness is taken now to be a field of vision. Cognitive activity is not a self-explanatory and self-contained whole with dividing walls.

The studies of mind by psycho-analysts in the 20th century has proved beyond the least possibility of doubt that cognitive activity is closely related to many other psychological processes of which we have no knowledge whatsoever. Consciousness

itself is now taken to be something dynamic, passing from the threshold of distinct awareness of something to something else which has its location in the sub-conscious or the unconscious regions of the mind. A large part of the human mind is conceived by modern psycho-analysts to be non-intellectual. Feelings and actions are equally important elements in consciousness. It is true that mind may not always express itself equally in all its three functions. It is nevertheless a matter of common experience that even though one element preponderates over the remaining two, it does not altogether tend to diminish the role that they have to play in experience. There is always a continuous inter-action going on between all these three components of consciousness, which means that none of them is intelligible apart from the rest.

When we think, therefore, of the religious consciousness, or a typical religious experience, we have to attempt to understand it or to give an intelligible account of it with the coalescence of all the constituent processes of the mind. In religion, we not only believe in something—that is to say, not only do we hold something to be the exhaustive theoretical explanation of our experience—but we also live it in our lives and orient ourselves to it by our emotions and actions. Our conduct and behaviour undergo a complete transfiguration to the extent that our actions wear a colour and complexion which is different from those of the conduct and behaviour of others.

XIV. Bhakti as the Designation of the Religious Attitude

If asked to propose one term so comprehensive as to include all that has been discussed so far by us in connection with the nature and content of religion, we could find perhaps no term more suitable for the purpose than "*bhakti*". We shall discuss the notion of *bhakti* and its implications in the chapters ahead. For the present, we may just remember that the term is immensely

suggestive, as it not only draws our attention to the metaphysics that is the basis of such a religion, but also reveals on closer reflection that the conception of the nature of Reality that forms the basis of religion is found to emerge from the consideration of the nature of human knowledge itself. In other words, although we ordinarily apprehend the world and consider it to be independent of us, existing without any relation to the human mind, yet when we examine critically the conditions that are necessary for the knowledge of the given world, we find that the Absolute or God must be the necessary starting point of any discussion or treatment of the problem of knowledge. Religion has a metaphysics behind it which in its turn receives its strength from epistemology, that branch of the philosophical discipline in which attention is focused, among other things, on the problem concerning the conditions of knowledge. That there must be a spiritual principle necessarily involved in the process of knowledge which brings together the antithetic principles of the ego and the non-ego, the subject and the object, matter and mind, is beyond all question.

Bhakti is oriented to God. But God is the name we give to that principle conceived as personal. The object of natural theology is simply to point to the necessity of such a spiritual principle at the root of our knowledge of the universe. Its function ends with a mere logical demonstration of the inevitability of this spiritual principle. It has nothing to say about the existential relationship between man and God which is mainly a matter of revelation. It is from revelation in which God discloses Himself that we know much more about God than by mere logic or reason. *Bhakti* lays emphasis on the rational or intellectual demonstration of the necessity of the Supreme Mind and insists on the existential relationship between man and God.

Thus, from the point of view of the subject-object relationship, *bhakti* excludes the possibility of the application of the term 'religion' to any faith that is restricted only to the ethical

or moral level and that maintains that religion is to be understood exclusively in terms of immanent categories and has no other function than that of bringing to completion the inner possibilities of man. In contemporary Western theology, eminent thinkers have downgraded religion to mere secular dimensions by depriving it of God. But, we have argued, taking due account of the autonomous and unique nature of religion, that it is not mere ethics and that we cannot denature it by replacing it with a scheme of ethics. There is, that is to say, no possibility of religion without God. Again, since God is not a mere fact but a value and it is only in the existential relationship between man and God that His nature is fully revealed, religious knowledge is an encounter between the Divine and the human, which is impossible if God confronting man in religious experience were not personal.

Natural theology points out that it is no use talking of God as a fact if He were not also a value, and, therefore, personal. *Bhakti* suggests this personal encounter between God and man both of whom are personal in nature. This is, so far as both the ontological and epistemological problems of religion are concerned. It has been seen that this knowledge is different from all other forms of knowledge. Religious knowledge, religious experience and man's perception of God cannot be placed on the same level as science. Scientific knowledge and scientific criteria cannot be treated as supplying any clue to the interpretation of the meaning and validity of religious truth. It is the entire personality of man that is involved in the religious relationship.

The connotation of *bhakti* is so comprehensive and wide that it emphasises the collaboration and harmony of all the three elements of consciousness, so that religion cannot be defined or understood abstractly in terms of any one of the three components. Religions are different not because each has one element of religious consciousness which altogether excludes the remaining elements, but only because of the predominance

of one over the rest. *Bhakti* is at the same time cognitive, conative and volitional, reminding us that, as involving the entire human personality, it includes knowledge, feeling and action as the essentially inseparable components in religious consciousness. Since the human personality is a systematic organisation of all these three modes of knowledge, only a religion that does equal justice to them can meet our religious needs.

Such a conception of religion supplies us with the standard whereby we can assess the worth of the conception of reality and of the religious experience itself advanced by any particular religion. A formal definition of religion, therefore, cannot be found in the entire corpus of the philosophical and religious writings of the Viśiṣṭādvaita because, unlike Western theologians, Indian religious thinkers were interested more in living the truth than in framing a conception of it. If one is asked by what single term the religion of the Viśiṣṭādvaita were to be adequately understood in the light of the facts and arguments we have marshalled above, there would perhaps be no better term than '*bhakti*'.

Hence, in an adequate conception of religion which can answer our theological questions and also fulfil our emotional and practical needs, all issues arising from an intellectual enquiry into the foundations of religious consciousness force themselves on us. Human experience is an organism in which all its elements are inseparably related to one another. None the less, unless by abstraction and conceptual understanding we isolate the elements contained in it, we cannot understand its manifold bearings on human life. Nature, God and man are the indispensable ontological foundations of the religious relationship. All these three ontological principles are so indispensable and related to one another that any one of them can be understood only in its relations with the rest. Our exposition of the nature of religion affords sufficient insight into the truth of this assertion.

The denial of the reality of any one of these three elements amounts to atheism. It is in view precisely of this very requirement that philosophers of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school have invariably maintained the position that a sound theological foundation for religion requires the acknowledgment of the reality of Nature, man and God. In other words, it is not mere belief in God exclusive of the reality of the world and the finite individual, a sort of acosmism, that can meet the demand of the religious mind. Pantheism which, as the history of Eastern and Western philosophy shows, is either the affirmation of the reality of the Absolute alone by denying the reality of the world and the individual self or else the identity of God with the individual self and the world in a way that altogether obliterates the transcendence of God, cannot provide us with a satisfactory theoretical foundation for religion.

The doctrine of the reality of the world is materialism and, in a scheme of the naturalistic or materialistic explanation of reality, there is absolutely no scope for a religious orientation to the universe. Religion needs for its metaphysics a spiritual interpretation of reality which, though it does not deny the reality of matter, insists nevertheless that no meaning can be attached to the knowledge of matter without its relation to the mind. Hence, materialism is the very antithesis of religion.

Neither can the human ego alone constitute the basis of religion. The capital fact in religious experience is the insufficiency of human life. The finitude and imperfection of man and the mystery surrounding human nature point to the transcendence of man by a higher spiritual principle in which he seeks his fulfilment. Thus, although man is an indispensable element in religion, yet it is not man alone that can be said to be the foundation of religion. To speak of religion in terms exclusively of human dimensions and human interests, is to bring it down to the purely secular level. One has, therefore, to avoid also the error of humanism which tries to understand

human history in purely secular terms and immanent categories. Humanism has originated from the impulse to understand man as a product of mere Nature. But man cannot be a product of Nature, because his nature is such that it is rather Nature itself that cannot be understood if we exclude man from it. But humanism gives primacy to Nature and makes man its product. In such a system of thinking we can talk of religion only by completely misconceiving its nature and putting something else in its place. Man is essentially a spirit, who transcends both Nature and history and is the focus or centre of knowledge and feeling. There would be no religion on earth if there were no man with self-consciousness and the experience of finitude, imperfection and the unfulfilled desire to understand the mystery of the universe. Hence religion has to give due recognition to the reality of man also. Religion cannot, therefore, be based upon a pantheistic view of life for which human individuals are not real.

Again, it is in the world that we live, it is through time and history that we grow and develop in spiritual wisdom, and it is through the objects of Nature that we find God revealed to us, so that the universe can be regarded as a symbol of God. Hence, there can be no satisfactory religious conception of reality, if it questions the reality of the world. The denial of the reality of the world also, apart from the fact that it is rooted in a dualistic view, is a sort of atheism. Viśiṣṭādvaita, which claims to furnish an adequate philosophical foundation for the religious conception of reality, attaches proportionate importance to all these three principles of Nature, man and God. It is not the religion of God alone or of man alone or of the world alone, but of all the three taken together, that is to say, of the knowledge and worship of a real God by real man in a real world. That is the reason why from the philosophical point of view this religion is designated Viśiṣṭādvaita. We shall discuss in greater detail the ontological structure of Viśiṣṭādvaita in the next lecture.

CHAPTER III

ONTOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF VĪŚIṢṬĀDVAITA

I. Viśiṣṭādvaita and Natural Theology

The ontological structure of Viśiṣṭādvaita is not the result of a logical deduction from an *a priori* concept with hardly any connection with human experience. Its insights are derived from a penetrating analysis and understanding of human experience. The method followed is an inductive and not a deductive one, because its ontological principles emerge out of a profound reflection on the nature of human experience and the data that are objects of knowledge.

This explains why although Viśiṣṭādvaita lays emphasis on revelation as the final source of information regarding the nature of Reality, it nevertheless indicates the role of reason in making religious truths communicable and intelligible to us. Revealed truths must be supported by experience and by a rational analysis of the principles involved in religious experience. Revealed truths must be demonstrable by reason in order that they may survive logical scrutiny. The relation between revelation and natural religion is such that unless the former is supported by the latter, it is bound to lapse into scepticism, as can be seen in the case of the whole course of the development of Western theology from the time when theologians like Karl Barth made a clean sweep of reason and pointed out that there is no human way of approach to God. The result has been disastrous, inasmuch as religion has been downgraded to ethical dimensions and we hear nowadays much noise about religion without God.

In Indian religions, and for the matter of that, in Viśiṣṭādvaita, such a watertight division between revelation and natural religion has never been given much weight, and that is the reason why the necessity of the interpretation of revealed scripture by the application of the canons of natural religion has always been emphasized by *Vedāntic ācāryas* from time to time in response to the pressing social needs of the times in which they flourished. Each stage in the development of Indian religious thought can thus be interpreted in the light of urgent social needs. New questions incident to the changing spirit of the time were asked and the answers proposed were to be located in the classical texts themselves, for which *Vedāntic* teachers called in the aid of the methods and principles of natural theology in exposition and criticism of their religious beliefs and convictions.

Since the superstructure of Viśiṣṭādvaita is securely built upon the solid foundations supplied by human experience, the principles which it puts forward are inescapable. It would not be a plausible estimate of Viśiṣṭādvaita with regard to the precise relationship between reason and revelation in its scheme of thinking, if we say that it attaches undue importance to revelation alone. The emphasis which Rāmānuja had laid on revelation is the source of a colossal misconception of its standpoint with respect to the precise relation between reason and revelation. However, the fact that it is by reason and in the light of experience that Rāmānuja interprets the religious experiences of the *Upaniṣadic* thinkers bears eloquent testimony to the tremendous significance he attaches to the legitimacy of the application of rational methods in the determination and discrimination of spiritual truths. Viśiṣṭādvaita is not, therefore, a mere after-thought, as perhaps it might appear from the combination of the two words 'Viśiṣṭa' and 'Advaita'. We need not be misled into thinking as the very term at least on its surface makes us believe, that it is only a compromise or concession effected by subsequent thought in the philosophical framework of *Advaita*.

Of course, both 'Advaita' and 'Viśiṣṭādvaita' are terms coined by *Vedāntic ācāryas* much later. In the classical philosophical literature, neither of these two terms is to be found except perhaps in some of the later *Upaniṣads*. All the same, *Vedāntic* thinkers have resorted to the same scripture for the support of their philosophical doctrines. Viśiṣṭādvaita is no less an authoritative philosophical doctrine with its support in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* than Advaita itself. It is very doubtful if the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* had any idea of the type of Advaita that is generally grafted on them. Radhakrishnan, for example, has interpreted the *Upaniṣads* in a manner that cannot be taken to be on all fours with Advaita. In fact, the philosophical doctrine which Rāmaṇuja advanced has a hoary tradition behind it and was headed by a galaxy of ancient *ācāryas* like Bodhayana, Damaṇḍa, Guha and others. Viśiṣṭādvaita, therefore, is as much an original doctrine of the *Upaniṣads* as Advaita can claim to be. But, apart from the scriptural sanction that it receives, it has to be decided if it has any solid foundation in experience itself. We are not here concerned with the scriptural support for Viśiṣṭādvaita. Since we hold the position that the ontological principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita are the necessary implications of the nature of knowledge itself, we have to see how far this claim can be justified. The assistance of tradition or the support that scripture can lend to it is only a subsidiary question. For the present, our concern is with its rational basis: how is it that human experience itself becomes a mystery if the three principles, namely, God, Nature and man are not involved in it? The uniqueness of Viśiṣṭādvaita consists in this that it recognises the reality not only of the Absolute but also of the world and the finite individual in contradistinction to the absolute monism (*Kevalādvaita*) of Śaṅkarācārya, for which the last two are unreal. The question that confronts us is whether there is any such necessity in human experience itself to point to God, Nature and Man. If the nature of experience is such that without God, Nature and Man we are not in a position to understand it, then we can say that belief in the

reality of these three ultimates is not the product of mere uncritical faith, but is warranted by the nature of human knowledge itself. Let us, therefore, examine closely the nature of human knowledge so as to understand the necessary conditions without which it is not possible for us to know anything.

II. From Matter to Mind: Subject and Object

The recognition of the reality of Nature, the finite mind and God, the three ontological principles of Visistadvaita, or, as we may also say, the movement of thought from Nature to the finite mind and from the finite mind to God, is the outcome of a close inspection of the nature of human knowledge. The attitude to the world in the most primitive form of consciousness is one of passive receptivity in which the world is taken to be existing independently of the human mind. In our ordinary consciousness, therefore, we start with the dualistic view of Nature or the world and the finite mind. This sharp dualism has received philosophical formulation and support in materialism and realism. It cannot be denied that our ordinary conception of things and of the world starts with the assumption of the difference between them. At the commonsense level, thought is not critical and this explains why it starts with the given world as a fact, having a self-contained existence without any relation to the finite mind or thought. The self-sufficiency of the external world is the product of that view of it in which not much attention is paid to the process involved in the knowledge of it. Questions, however, of the nature of reality or of that which one knows, cannot be abstracted from the method, the process and also the conditions necessary for the knowledge thereof.

Philosophy throws immense light on the mutual implications of the relationship between the subject and the object. Knowledge means the reality of both the subject and the object, the movement both from the object to the subject and from the

subject to the object. So long as in our common commerce with the world, our knowledge of it enables us to secure adjustments in accordance with our expectations, we are not at all required to examine the conditions involved in its knowledge. Errors and illusions are as palpable and obvious facts as truth, and this difference in our orientation and adjustment to the world calls for an explanation of the knowledge situation as a measure to forestall any possibility of the failure of our expectations in our adjustment to the world.

Closer inspection and examination of the nature of knowledge reveals the inter-dependence of Nature and the finite mind, of the subject and the object. Although, thus, in the first stage of our contact with or awareness of the world outside, we think of it as independent of us, yet reflection upon the conditions necessary for the knowledge of it shows that it is not quite independent of the finite mind. But this insight into the reciprocal implication of the subject and the object and their co-relativity is the product of critical thinking which certainly cannot be the first movement of thought. Although even in the first movement of our consciousness the subject and the object are already there, and their mutual independence is not the truth of their relationship, we start with the assumption of their mutual exclusive existence.

Not only is this point of view characteristic of naive and uncritical thinking, but even philosophers have often fallen victims to it. They have given a philosophical formulation to this conception of the exclusive existence of mind and matter with no relation between them, and it is this type of thinking which is the source of the formal laws of thought like those of identity, contradiction and excluded middle, all of which express the same truth, namely, that things are cut off from one another and enjoy self-contained exclusive existence.

Modern Western thought in the philosophical systems from Descartes to Kant bears eloquent testimony to the truth of our

contention. The dualism of the subject and the object, of matter and mind, is its outstanding feature. And modern philosophers have not been able to tackle the problem of knowledge because of the dualistic standpoint adopted in their thinking. Once we start with this assumption of the exclusive existence of Nature and the finite mind, we cannot bridge the gulf between them. Although modern philosophy is primarily epistemological with ambitions to solve the problem of knowledge, it ends with the conclusion that we do not know anything at all and that whatever we know about the object or about the given world does not pertain to the nature of reality but is rather the mind's own contribution. Descartes who starts with his *cogito* ('I think'), propounds the doctrine of the ego which thinks nothing because the ego is what has been abstracted and isolated from everything by reference to which alone there can be any possibility of thinking at all.

If the dualism of the subject and the object, of Nature and the finite mind, is the pivotal starting point of our convictions, then we are bound to slip into the error either of materialism or of subjectivism. Modern philosophy has fallen into both these errors. Descartes could not think of the existence of the soul in animals which were for him mere automata. Men alone, in his opinion, were in possession of the soul although even the human body was a machine. The new confidence arising from the mechanical conception of the world which it was within the power of man to bend down to his own needs, engendered in man the belief that since there was no supernatural agency to which he had to turn, even for the purpose of bringing about moral and spiritual transformation in human nature, medicine was enough. Descartes writes: "If it should ever prove possible to find some means of making men gentler and wiser than heretofore, I believe that means will be found in medicine."⁵⁵ Even Leibniz, who claimed that there is nothing

55. *The Times Literary Supplement* of 12 July 1934, quoted in John Baillie, *An Invitation to Pilgrimage*, p. 91, Pelican Books, London 1960.

dead or inert in Nature, has asserted that the mind is a machine.⁵⁸ Thus, whether we are constrained to think that matter is the primary reality of which the mind is a product or else we hold that mind alone is the reality and matter is a chimera, modern philosophy, just because it starts with this false assumption, is beset with these two disastrous difficulties.

The attempt to establish the self-sufficiency and exclusive existence of matter led to the distinction of primary and secondary qualities. Philosophers spent much thought on their relation to the object of knowledge. The artificial problem with which they were occupied was how much in point of fact belongs to matter and how much is the contribution of mind to it. Thus, matter according to both Descartes and Locke, is what can be expressed in quantities, and can be understood and interpreted in the language of mathematics. That alone is real which can be measured and quantified. The world of quantity supersedes the world of quality. Matter with extension, solidity, impenetrability, duration and number becomes an abstraction without the secondary qualities of sound, touch, taste and colour and so on by means of which we are able to know it and to assert its existence.

Berkley subjects this notion of matter to serious criticism and points out that the *esse* of nature is its *percipi*. To exist is to be perceived. He argues that there is no warrant for the existence of matter without qualities and the ideas of them which alone are the real objects of knowledge. Even Locke, the father of British empiricism, kept matter and the finite mind in watertight compartments, because he held that there is no direct contact between Nature and the finite mind or the object and the subject, and that the knowledge of the former by the latter was mediated by ideas. This procedure of thinking

58. Falckenbirg, *History of Philosophy*, p. 630.

resulted in directing attention to the ideas and sensations with the result that the last word of philosophical wisdom was the scepticism of Hume, which abolished with one stroke the existence of both mind and matter, the subject and the object.

The history of the idealistic standpoint in modern philosophy is pregnant with instructive insights on which Hegel concentrated. He rightly gave a new turn to the traditional thinking by a logic altogether different from the formal, traditional discipline, and announced that although it is true that mind and matter, the subject and the object, are different, yet their difference is not such that it excludes altogether their inseparable relation and connection. They are distinct, but certainly not discordant. Difference is as much true of them as their identity. We can distinguish between them in thought, but existentially they are inseparable. Unless, therefore, they are identical in spite of their difference, and different in spite of their identity, we cannot solve the problem of knowledge: we cannot explain how we know the object. The object is not altogether alien to the subject, nor is there any subject without the object.

We can no more abstract or isolate matter or object from man or the mind than we can think of the mind's activity apart from its relation to matter or the non-ego. Man doubly presupposes Nature, because all his organs of knowledge by means of which he knows the world outside, are located in his physical body which is part of and continuous with the material world. Secondly, it is Nature that supplies him with the field of his action and knowledge and the environment by contact and co-operation with which he can achieve perfection. Hence mind is not external to matter, though it is different from it. We cannot think of mind knowing only its own states and its operations which have no connection with and give us no information about the outside world. This is the mistake that Locke and the British empiricists in the West made. *Yogācāra Vijñānavādins* in India also imprisoned the mind in the narrow

circle of its own ideas and perceptions. Such a position which amounts to treating all our ideas and perceptions as mere subjective phenomena cut off from the world, is virtually nothing short of the denial of knowledge. In spite of their difference, the self and the not-self are united. It is not their individual existence but rather their dualism that is an abstraction and hinders the solution of the problem of knowledge. If they are in their very nature separate, they cannot be joined and the gulf between them cannot be bridged.

It is these false abstractions in which some of the contemporary Western philosophers like Moore and Russell have indulged that have led to modern nominalism and scepticism. But if these theories only raise superficial objections and doubts as to the possibility of knowledge which is the primary datum with which we start in all our theoretical enquiries, then surely no one who stands outside the circle of the ego and the non-ego, the subject and the object, can make us understand how we know. Even the self must be a fiction to one who divorces it from the not-self.

Starting from the dualistic view of the relation between the subject, the finite mind or the ego, and the object, the world, or matter, modern philosophy ultimately ends in reducing matter to an abstraction, an unknown X, which is nothing over and above and beyond what mind contributes to it. The same logic which has led to this unknown abstraction is worked out to its fatal consequences in the sensationalism of Hume in which there is no room for belief in either of the substances. "The plain fact is that Descartes, having confined himself to self-consciousness as the only immediate datum, has, and can have, no right to believe in the existence of anything else at all except his self and its states. Solipsism is the only logical issue of his initial procedure."⁵⁷ Matter and mind are distinct

57. William Temple, *Nature, Man and God*, pp. 67-68.

principles, but not quite opposed to each other. Their difference is as much the truth of their nature as their inseparable existence. "That the antithesis, the opposition, is a necessary condition in consciousness for the very being of consciousness, that mind, in other words, only realises itself in the form of that which is contrasted with nature, ought not to lead us to confer a wholly fictitious and unwarranted independence upon the opposites themselves."⁵⁸

The development of the empiricist theory of knowledge from Locke to Hume leaves us with the moral that the subject and the object cannot be separated. While the subject and the object are in our experience given together, sophisticated, hair-splitting reflections upon the relation between them have ended in false abstractions with the result that the very problem which it has been the object of the philosophers concerned to solve, has ultimately met with a lamentable failure. If, on the other hand, we do not think that the object is alien to the subject, that matter or the world is not so opposed to or different from the finite mind as it is ordinarily taken to be, but rather bears the marks of intelligence or gives evidence of the presence of those characteristic features in it because of which the finite mind or the ego is able to know it or rather finds its own self in it, then it follows unquestionably that the object, though distinct from the subject, is not opposed to it. The difference of the subject and the object, of matter and mind, of the ego and the non-ego, is not such as to exclude the close and intimate relation between them which accounts for knowledge that is the product of their very intimate relation. Nonetheless, the difference is already there.⁵⁹

58. R. Adamson, *The Development of Modern Philosophy*, Vol. II., p. 17, William Blackwood & Sons, London, 1903.

59. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

Knowledge is an ultimate fact. Our philosophizing can start with the acceptance of knowledge as the most incontrovertible fact of our conscious life. It is not so much the fact of knowledge as the abstractions into which it is analysed that demand explanation. All errors of modern philosophy have stemmed from the unwarranted abstractions which dissecting analysis of the nature and constitution of knowledge has begotten. "For all experience is always threefold: it is always simultaneously experience of the subject, of the object, and of the overbridging thought; indeed, clear consciousness always first concerns the object, and only much later on, the subject. And thus, through that artificial abstraction, there promptly arose such sheer figments of the brain as knowledge, not of objects at all, but of subjective states alone; and (stranger still) knowledge that objects exist, and that they all have an inside, but an inside which is never actually revealed to us by the qualities of those objects:.....he imprisons himself in his own faculties, and, as to anything further, knows only that objects exist as to which these faculties essentially and inevitably mislead him."⁶⁰

Neither matter nor object can be said to be the product of mind, in which case there would be nothing for the mind to know and everything would be a state of the mind, nor can mind be reduced to matter which is its object and without which it is impossible to know what it is because all features or characteristics or categories which express our knowledge of matter, are mind's contribution to it. "To reduce experience to a purely inner experience would, therefore, be suicidal, if it meant the reduction of the external object to a mere inward state of the subject: for, with this reduction, the subject itself would disappear, or, what is the same thing, would cease to be object to itself. Hence, the transcendental reflexion which calls

60. William Temple, *Nature, Mind and God*, p. 79.

attention to the relativity of the external object to the subject, must not be interpreted as if it reduced that object to the feelings of a sensitive subject; for these do not constitute an inner any more than they constitute an outer experience, and they can be transformed into an inner experience only by a process which presupposes the determination of outward objects as such."⁶¹

It is the dualistic point of view of philosophy which has been responsible for both these inexcusable heresies in modern philosophy. Hence, unless we start with the assumption that the inseparable relation of subject and object is the incontrovertible truth of their nature, we cannot pass from the one to the other, nor can we account for the close and intimate relation between them of which knowledge is the product. Their self-contained, isolated identity cannot furnish any starting point by means of which we can explain their nature. It is just because neither mind nor matter, neither subject, nor object is, in point of fact, shut up in the narrow circumference of its self-contained existence that neither of them is intelligible without the other.

"What is true of Nature," says William Wallace, "is equally true of the Mind. For these two, as we have already seen, are not isolable from each other. Neither the mind nor the so-called external world are either of them self-subsistent existences, issuing at once and ready-made out of nothing. The mind does not come forth, either equipped or unequipped, to conquer the world: the world is not a prey prepared for the spider, waiting for the mind to comprehend and appropriate it. The mind and the world, the so-called 'subject' and so-called 'object', are equally the results of a process."⁶²

61. Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, Vol. I p. 643, James Maclehose, Glasgow, 1889.

62. William Wallace, *Prolegomena to the Study of Hegel's Philosophy and especially of his Logic*, p. 207, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1894.

"The difficulty of passing from the world of being to the world of thoughts," he goes on, "from notion to thing, from subject to object, from Ego to Non-ego, is a difficulty which men have unduly allowed to grow upon them. It grows by talking of and analysing mere being, mere thought, mere notion, or mere thing. And it will be dispelled when it is seen that there is no mere being, and no mere thought: that these two halves of the unity of experience—the unity we divide and the division we unify in every judgment we make—are continually leaning out of themselves, each towards the other".⁶³

We have to get rid of the false view of the exact relationship between them which sets them up as the two contradictory and opposite principles with no possible point of contact between them. But if, as we have seen, this false assumption of absolute difference between them lands us in the self-invited difficulty of explaining the intimate relation between them, designated as knowledge, then the unquestioned conclusion follows from this, namely, that it is not their exclusive relation, their opposition or difference that is their essential nature, but rather their organic structure. Subject and object, matter and mind are existentially inseparable, though in thought we can make distinction between them. Matter and mind are not one; they are quite different principles and yet their difference does not exclude their close and intimate relation. It is exactly this meaning that is suggested in Viśiṣṭādaīta by the technical relation of *Aprthak-siddhi*. Rāmanuja says that the object or the non-ego or matter is different from the subject or the ego or the finite mind, and yet he asserts that it undergoes changes in accordance with the will and the desire or rather the actions of the former. Non-intelligent matter, *acit*, according to Rāmanuja, is the field of the enjoyment of the fruits of actions of the individual souls and

undergoes changes in accordance with them which means that *acit* or matter is subordinate to *cit* or the individual soul.

अचिद्वस्तुनश्च तत्कर्मनिमित्तपरिणामित्वेनाप्राधान्यमिति प्रतीयते ।⁶⁴

But not only is the non-ego, thus, what is shaped by the ego ; the ego also is conscious to itself only as it is conscious of the identity of its act in determining objects. It follows that the mere flux of sensations in us, as sensitive subjects can in no way become objective for us, is such a series.

“ This, indeed, is involved directly in Kant’s admission,” observes Caird, “ that the ego is conscious of itself only as it is conscious of the identity of its act in determining objects. It follows that the mere flux of sensations in us is such a series. In that sense, inner experience, if we can call it so, has already disappeared in the development of a thinking self. Our inner experience is just our outer experience on its inner side, or it is an experience in which that inner side is specially reflected on. And, on the other hand, we must remember that, though such distinct reflexion may be wanting, there is no outer experience which is not also an inner experience : or, in other words, that the determination of things as objects in time and space through the categories cannot be separated from a consciousness, though it may be an undeveloped consciousness, of their relation to the subject, which in distinction from them is conscious of itself. We can no more have an outer experience without an inner experience, than we can have a consciousness of the mere particular as such without the universal, though in both cases it is possible that we may have the former without reflecting upon the latter ”.⁶⁵

64. *Srī Bhāṣya*, I, 93.

65. Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Kant*, Vol. I, pp. 641-642, James Maclehose, Glasgow, 1889.

As soon as we recognize that there is no escape from the view that there can be no object of knowledge in its utter abstraction from or without its relation to the subject inasmuch as we can by no means think of any object without also thinking of it as existing for the consciousness of the subject; and again, if we are constrained to admit on the other hand that the finite mind or the subject can be conscious of itself or of the power of knowledge that it possesses only in so far as it knows the object; then the conception of the organic relation between them becomes inevitably forced upon us. In Visistādvaita both matter and mind, the ego and the non-ego, the subject and the object are acknowledged to be real. They are irreducible realities, neither of them being liable to be assimilated to the other. In its theory of knowledge, Visistādvaita, therefore, mediates between the two extremes of materialism and subjectivism, and this is suggested by the relation of *Aprthaksiddhi* between them.

Since in this way, in spite of their difference, they exist together and, in spite of their co-existence, they continue to be different, there is no point in asking how in knowing a thing we pass from the object to the subject or from the subject to the object. The nature of knowledge is such that no question can be raised as to how the subject and the object, mind and matter are united. They are different and yet they are united. There is a relation and distinction between them which presupposes their unity. This distinction or difference between them is not of a kind that divides them from each other in a manner that it can be said that there is knowledge on the one side and the object or reality on the other, or that each is given altogether independently of the other. The fallacies arising from such dualistic points of view have already been shown to be due to the failure on the part of the partisans claiming the independence of the subject and the object, mind and matter of each other when in point of fact they can exist only as undivided from each other though they continue always to be different. Their difference is no bar to their co-existence: when, in our experience,

they are never presented to us except in relation to each other, there is no warrant for their separate or independent existence. It is not that mind knows itself first and then, from its thoughts, it infers the existence of the objects; but it knows itself only in distinguishing itself from and relating itself to the object or the outside world. That we have a self, we know only in distinguishing ourselves from and relating ourselves to the outside world.

The object is so inextricably bound up with the subject that in trying to know what it is, it is impossible for us, as idealists have been at pains to demonstrate, to abstract its relation to our conscious experience. The relation is so close and intimate between mind and matter, *cit* and *acit*, that no one can think of the enrichment and widening of one's knowledge and experience without contact with the object or with the outside world. On the other hand, the knowledge of the external world or of the object is unthinkable without a process that draws out the inner potentialities and capacities of the self which in their turn contribute to the enrichment and deepening of its consciousness and experience. The basic and primary fact, therefore, so far as knowledge is concerned, is the undivided existence of the subject and the object, mind and matter. It is not their undivided existence, but rather their independence that is the source of the difficulties in our attempt to understand the problem of knowledge which indeed is the creation of the philosophers themselves.

The relation between the subject and the object, mind and matter, being such as these considerations with respect to the nature of knowledge reveal it to be, nature, object, or matter and finite mind, subject or the ego are inseparable. There is no matter known to us without the characteristic features or categories of the mind in it. If Nature were a mere 'X' amorphous in character without order, laws, system or coherence in it, not only would it be impossible for mind to know it, but any knowledge of it in any possible form would be completely

ruled out. But, as is so obvious, the presence of reason in Nature or of thought and purpose in it and its dependence on the mind cannot be questioned. In a similar way, the subject or the mind cannot be conceived to be a mere abstraction. A subject, a mind that is conscious of nothing outside its solitary, lonely existence and knows nothing confronting it, is equally a figment of the mind. Thus, in the light of the relation of what is known as *Aprihaksiddhi*, Viśiṣṭādvaita points out that the subject and the object, matter and mind, are each one of them necessary for the other and is therefore equally real, although Nature certainly is subordinate to the mind. But this intimate relation between the subject and the object, matter and mind, again, leads us to find the explanation of their close relation in a higher spiritual principle, different from each one of them. This principle is *Brahman* the Infinite. Viśiṣṭādvaita thus recognizes the reality of the three ontological principles, the object (*acit*), the subject (*cit*) and *Brahman* (the Infinite), all the three being the members of a hierarchical system, *cit* being more valuable than *acit* and *Brahman* being the Supreme Value. We have now to see how the very logic of the situation, involved in the analysis of the nature and constitution of knowledge, forces upon us the acknowledgement of the reality of *Brahman*, the Supreme Infinite Mind.

III. From the Finite Mind to God

As there is no subject without the object and no object without the subject, even so the Infinite Mind and the finite mind cannot be exclusive of each other. As the relation between the object and the subject is organic, so also between the finite mind and the Infinite Mind the relation is such that from the former we pass to the latter. The pedestrian habit on the part of many philosophers who exalt the Infinite Mind to the point of excluding the finite individual and the world has been responsible for the justification of the pantheistic view of existence which leaves no room for the reality of the finite order. On the other

hand, exclusive emphasis on the individual self or the finite mind lapses into false individualism or humanism with no attempt at understanding the very nature of the finite mind which, as we shall try to show, is not understandable except on the postulation of the existence and reality of the Infinite Mind or God. As in our attempt at an analysis of the conditions necessary for knowledge we are constrained to advance from the object or the material world to the subject or the finite mind, so also in our further struggle to tackle the same problem in all other spheres, theoretical and practical, we find ourselves ineluctably confronted by the Infinite Mind, the Absolute or God.

Viṣiṣṭādvaita emphasizes more than once the fact that Nature, self and God, or the non-ego, the finite mind and the Infinite Mind constitute one system in which the reality of all of them is acknowledged. It has to be admitted that if solipsism is to be avoided, then not only has the existence of the Absolute Mind to be conceded, but due importance also has to be attached to the question of the reality of the external world and the individual self. If there are no individuals other than the Infinite Mind and no world external to the finite mind, what is it that the ego can be said to know and wherethrough can the character of the finite mind be maintained to be revealed or expressed? The common error to which the doctrine of the exclusive reality of the Infinite Mind has very often been a prey, is that of denying altogether the separate and independent existence of the individual selves and the external world with the disastrous consequence that it has not been able to emancipate itself from the standing vice of solipsism or scepticism. That is why Vedānta Desika has accused the metaphysical doctrines denying the reality of each of these ultimate principles as atheism. Somewhere in his writings he has said that there are three forms of atheism; namely, the denial of the existence of God, the false view of the separate and independent existence of matter and mind from God, and the doctrine of the falsity of the world.

The very problem of knowledge, as we have seen, involves as the unavoidable condition for the solution of it the recognition of the existence of the finite mind. It is now necessary to attack the other equally important issue of the necessity of the recognition of the Infinite Mind without which the finite mind cannot certainly have any meaning. Why at all it is necessary for us to pass from the finite mind to the Infinite Mind, has to be closely examined. Here, too, we have to guard ourselves against the false abstractions which make us keep the finite mind and the Infinite Mind in water-tight compartments. God is not given in the manner a pot as an object of our sensuous perception is given. Yet the finite mind cannot have any existence apart from its relation to the Infinite Mind. The dualistic point of view of abstracting the finite mind from the Infinite Mind and the Infinite Mind from the finite mind has to be abandoned. If the extremely limited scope of the Aristotelian laws of thought is quite inadequate to the relation between matter and mind, it is equally futile to extend their application to the relation between the finite mind and the Infinite Mind.

As the finite mind or the individual in its self-contained, exclusive existence, is in utter abstraction from many other similar individuals by entering into social relations with whom alone can it hope to be a real individual, then we can say that its identity is not an abstract identity with its self-contained solitary existence. We may, in our unreflective moods of holding to the surface view of things, think that individuals enjoy their solitary self-contained existence; yet when we make an attempt to understand what their real nature is, we find that their personality is built up only through their association with other finite beings. Therefore, this consideration brings out in clear relief the incorrectness and inadequacy of the commonplace doctrine of individualism. It is through his participation in larger communities, groups or associations to which the individual can pledge his affiliation that he can seek his fulfilment. As it is in virtue of the social relations in which the individual

participates that he can be a real man, so also it is only by entering into communion with the Infinite Mind, the Absolute or God that he can bring to perfection and fulfilment his intellectual, moral and spiritual powers and potentialities. This problem of the relation of the finite mind to the Infinite Mind or of man to God becomes a matter of tremendous significance and value in the religious sphere.

Religion, defined in as few terms as possible, is an attempt on the part of the human mind to transcend its finitude by communion with God. Hence, the relation of the finite mind to the Infinite Mind is the very heart and centre of the spiritual and religious life. It is impossible to think of religion without the recognition of the reality of God who must be other than the finite individual. Numerical identity of God and the individual is, according to the position we have taken up, completely subversive of religious life. Thus, the true relation between the finite mind and the Infinite Mind, which is a religious relation, requires us to hold that since the Infinite Mind is the very condition of the existence of the finite mind, it cannot be a negative idea, and that therefore we cannot possibly attach any meaning to the finite mind if we try to understand it in its abstraction from the Infinite Mind. But the same logic applies to the other side of the question as well. If the finite mind is not possible without God or the Infinite Mind, we cannot also think of the Infinite Mind without the finite mind, in which case it would turn out to be a mere abstraction or a negative principle. Therefore, not only are we required to establish the position that the finite mind in itself has no reality, but also that the Infinite Mind without the finite mind is altogether an empty idea.

To consider first the problem of the reference of the finite mind to the Absolute Mind or God, we find that man alone as distinguished from all other lower animals is moral or religious. Possessing self-consciousness as his supreme and unique prerogative, he is always smitten consciously or unconsciously with a

profound sense of his imperfection and is, therefore, characterised by an unabated aspiration after God and for the enjoyment of communion with Him. Man is so made in the image of the Divine that he does not find satisfaction in the things of the world, because they do not contain what God alone possesses. If he can be satisfied only with that which God gives, the meaning of his existence is to be found only in God.

Hence, it is not merely Nature, the external physical world and his participation in secular organisations and societies, and his company with his fellowmen that can give him lasting satisfaction and pleasure and can contribute to the perfection and fulfilment of his personality and can manifest the noblest feelings and sentiments latent in him. It is through his communion with God alone that his potentialities as a moral and spiritual being can be fully expressed. Hence, if all our finite thoughts, desires, wishes, emotions and feelings are ultimately transmuted and thus contribute to our spiritual enrichment and unfoldment and welfare in virtue of our contact and communion with the Infinite or the Absolute, then, in fact, we cannot ever escape the impact of His presence.

The finite mind, even in order to understand itself, presupposes the Infinite Mind. It is only through the Infinite Mind that the finite mind can think of its realization. Just as all scientific knowledge presupposes such a thing as the uniformity of Nature in the absence of which there cannot be any advancement in the province of scientific thought, so also except on the presumption of the existence of Infinite Mind or Thought, the Absolute or God, the finite mind can neither understand itself nor can it realize itself. Not only thus, without the Infinite or the Absolute, the finite mind is insufficient and cannot explain itself, but even for its fulfilment it presupposes the Infinite Mind.

“On the one hand, therefore, he (Hegel) points out that in the negative movement of thought, by which the finite consciousness

is shown to be in itself contradictory and suicidal, there is already involved a positive apprehension of that which is beyond the finite; for, as the negative is a definite negative, it includes that which is denied and something more,—and this something more is already, or at least implicitly involves the idea that solves the contradiction. On the other hand, and for the same reason, the positive idea—the idea of the infinite which is reached by negation of the finite—cannot be taken as merely affirmative or positive; it contains in itself an essential reference to the finite by negation of which it was reached. We must not, therefore, treat it like Spinoza as a mere *terminus ad quem*—a lion's den in which all the tracks of thought terminate, while none are seen to emerge from it.”⁶⁶

It is, as a matter of fact, in the most obvious patent atmosphere of unity that our existence as finite beings is contained. In all his knowledge and experience, in all the spheres of a theoretical and practical life, man's awareness of the Infinite Mind is already there, although he may not be conscious of it. His consciousness of this principle of unity is not an arbitrary product of imagination. It is only through the Infinite or Absolute Mind that the finite mind can develop. Man cannot realize the meaning of his life except through the recognition of the Infinite Mind which is the presupposition of all his higher experiences; but this impact and presence of the spiritual unitary principle is so obvious that we are not clearly conscious of it in the same way in which we do not clearly recognise the presence of air around us. Our obscure consciousness of the Infinite Mind is because of its very immediate presence to us. “That unity is not usually an object of consciousness, just because it is the presupposition of all consciousness. It escapes notice, because it is the ground on which we stand, or the atmosphere in which we breathe;

66. Caird, *Hegel*, pp. 50-51.

because it is not one thing or thought rather than another, but that through which all things are, and are known. Hence we can scarcely become conscious of its existence until something leads us to question its truth".⁶⁷

Its immediate presence is the reason of our obscure knowledge of it. Unless something extraordinary happens in the usual course of our knowledge, we do not feel ourselves called upon to recognize its existence. But when something extraordinary in the normal course of our life happens which compels us to analyse the conditions of our knowledge and experience and we ultimately fall back upon its conditions, we are obliged to concede that all that we know is known only as a part or as an element in one experience and that, of the unity of our experience, this spiritual principle is the presupposition. It is the presupposition both of the finite mind and of the objects of our knowledge. Ordinarily, in our unreflective moods, it is very hard for us to believe that the world in which we live is an intelligible world characterised by continuity and self-consistency. Differences of outward separateness of the objects of the world are so palpable that it is really a very difficult task for us to grasp any thread of unity in them. Nonetheless, the world is a system with respect to which unity is no less true than difference. In spite of the differences which impinge our consciousness, there is behind and beneath them all a system which is the result of a unitary principle constantly at work in them. The differences are, therefore, through the expression and manifestation of this unitary principle. It is this unitary principle that is the fountain-source of all our spiritual and moral interests. Belief in God is the same as the recognition of the presence of this spiritual unitary principle behind the universe which permeates all the sides of our being, all forms of our consciousness, thought, feeling and will. Its presence in

67. *Ibid.* p. 138.

the system of the world is intelligible in the same way in which it is the existence of the Self within us that is the source of unity, system and coherence in all our outward activities. The changes and occurrences in the outward forms of the world and our external physical activities stand on the same level; and coherence, unity, order and system on both these levels cannot be understood except on the suppositions of the finite and Infinite Minds distinct from each other

Further reflection on human thought leads to the same result. All our knowledge is based upon an absolute criterion of thought. Our judgments and propositions have claims to truth. But our judgments, if they have any claim to truth, the objective truth or reality to which thought is expected to conform, presuppose an absolute standard or criterion of truth. There is an ideal of knowledge to which it must be an approximation. How are thoughts likely to transcend the chaotic conditions of the sensations in which they originate? Without this absolute standard, these sensations themselves would not transform their chaotic, amorphous state into a systematic, coherent one. Knowledge is nothing if it is not a self-consistent, coherent body of truth. One cannot embark on an enquiry or proceed on a voyage of truth and discovery, except on the supposition of the existence of the Absolute Mind which must be the owner of this absolute criterion of truth.

The finite mind, again, puts its faith in all the forms of knowledge for the attainment of that end or goal of it which must be Infinite. The existence of the Infinite Mind as the destiny or end of the whole of our knowledge is the very presupposition of it. This Infinite Absolute Mind as the goal of our knowledge is already there. We cannot escape it. The Infinite Mind certainly is not the product of human thought because it is the very presupposition of it.

The intimate, undivided existence of thought and reality, of mind and matter, subject and object, presupposes their

fundamental unity. That they are different and yet related cannot be questioned. But how are they united in spite of their difference? That which accounts for their unity has to be sought elsewhere. The ontological argument for the existence of God failed, because it was advanced by one who started with dualism between thought and existence. But if there is no warrant for any radical opposition between thought and existence, matter and mind, the finite and the infinite, then the existence of God or Absolute Mind can explain their unity and overcome or transcend their difference. Just as the difference between thought and existence is not an absolute one, so also the opposition between the finite and the Infinite is not absolute, because the difference between them presupposes their unity which is beyond and different from them. There is ultimate unity between thought and existence, mind and matter, subject and object, which is the very basis of their opposition or difference. If there is mind that knows the world in spite of its opposition to it, there must be God because of whom this opposition of matter and mind, thought and existence is transcended. Hence it follows that the existence of God or the Absolute Mind explains that unity which overcomes their opposition. The same is true of the finite mind as well. Without God, we can neither understand how thought and existence, subject and object, matter and mind, and the finite mind and the infinite mind are united. As we can pass from the opposition of thought and reality to their unity in God, so also it is arguable that since the finite mind is not self-explanatory and self-sufficient, its meaning can be found only in God or the Infinite Mind. Hence it is only by reference to the Infinite or the Absolute Mind that the finite human thought can be understood. Doubt or denial is not the final resting place of the human mind, because even though one doubts or denies, one always presupposes that which one doubts or denies. There is a reality behind our thought which even doubt or denial presupposes.

How else do we accept any of our statements or judgments except on the supposition that there is universal thought in the Universal Mind? The absolute criterion, absolute universal thought, in virtue of conformity to which our finite thoughts are supposed to be true, must be the possession of the Absolute Mind. Hence, the finite mind is not intelligible except by reference to the Absolute Mind.

The fact that whereas all finite ideas and thoughts can be easily abstracted from the finite mind, the latter cannot abstract or isolate itself from the absolute thought, is another additional reason for the belief that the finite mind has its explanation only in the Absolute Mind.

The finite mind and the Infinite Mind cannot, therefore, be thought to be mere abstractions, each understandable by itself and enjoying a self-contained solitary existence. The conditions of our experience or knowledge have made it certain that the Infinite is involved in the very texture of our consciousness as its unavoidable condition and presupposition. This is the reason why we do not think that the Infinite Mind is sufficient by itself. As the finite mind thus has its meaning and explanation in the Infinite Mind, it has been said that man is not either absolutely finite or absolutely Infinite. We do not dream when we know that we are dreaming. Similarly, the very thought which makes us aware of our finitude also reveals to us that, without having the cognition of the Infinite, we could not ever know that we are finite beings. To know the limit of something is also to know something else that lies beyond the limit. Hence, on all these considerations, it is pretty certain that our belief in the existence of the Infinite Mind is not a mere figment of imagination, but is backed by reason.

Our whole rational life, theoretical, emotional and practical, is not at all possible except on the presupposition of the Absolute Mind. Unity, order, system are marks of mind, and if we cannot know the world except when these features

characterise it, except when these characteristics are manifested in it, only the Absolute Mind can be the cause of the character that belongs to it. The alternative to this supposition would be a chaotic world in which no knowledge would be possible. We always take it for granted that, in spite of the differences, the universe is one, because all things have definite relations to one another without which they are not intelligible. The key to the understanding of a part of it is the whole. The same is the case with our emotional and practical life. Except when all our conflicting emotions and passions have one central point of focus, our lives are bound to be disintegrated and disorganised. Unity of purpose can alone harmonise and synthesise the conflicting elements of practical life. The demand of this harmony and coherence inevitably implies the existence of the Absolute Mind.

Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, has very effectively tried to teach us that the Infinite Mind which is already given in our consciousness along with the immediate awareness of our small self, is not known to us after we have abstracted the imperfections of all finite things, thus making God the negation of everything finite that we know. He argues that the conception of the Infinite Mind is not negative, because it is the most positive reality by comparison with whose perfection alone are we able to judge all things in human experience to be imperfect, finite, fragile and transient. "I must not imagine", he says in the *Third Meditation*, "that the conception of the Infinite is got merely by negation of the finite.....On the contrary, I plainly see that there is more reality in the infinite substance than in the finite substance, so much so that it may even be prior to my consciousness of myself. For how could I doubt or desire, how could I be conscious, that is to say, that anything is wanting to me, and that I am not altogether perfect, if I had not within me the idea of a being more perfect than myself by comparison with whom I recognize the defects of my nature?" The finite mind is inextricably

bound up with the Infinite Mind, and just because it cannot claim a self-contained, isolated existence apart from the Infinite, without reference to it we are not able to understand our nature and existence.

When we turn to an analytical examination of our practical life, the same result is forced on us with irresistible force. Except by finding ourselves in larger wholes or communities and groups, except by affiliating ourselves to larger, more universal and comprehensive communities, we cannot hope to achieve any degree of moral advancement and spiritual fulfilment. Not only is the Infinite Mind the presupposition of our theoretical life, but it is also the inescapable condition and postulate of all harmony, integration, perfection and fulfilment in our moral and spiritual life. It is by enjoying communion with the Absolute, Infinite Mind, that we rise to a higher stature in the scale of being. In moral and spiritual life, we transcend our petty, small, narrow self and identify ourselves with the Universal Mind. There is a perpetual, eternal urge within each one of us as rational beings to rise above the demands of the flesh and to enjoy expansion and enlargement of being. This is in itself a positive proof of the operation and existence of the Infinite Mind in each one of us.

The *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (II. 2. 8) emphatically declares that when one has the knowledge of the Supreme, all the knots of one's heart are rent asunder, all doubts are cut off and all deeds are completely wiped out. This obviously makes it clear that theoretical doubts and puzzles assail us, we suffer emotional disintegration and imbalances and are under the sway of the inexorable determinism of the law of *karma*, until we know and comprehend God, the Absolute Mind. If there were no Absolute Mind, no unifying spiritual principle which can bring about a certain system and coherence in the conflicting, fluctuating tendencies and emotions within the human personality, man would never have been qualitatively superior

to the brute. It would be impossible in that case to understand man as a self-transcending being which unquestionably he is.

The spiritual nature and constitution of the being of man is such that he is always anxious to transcend himself in his thought, feeling and will, because he is not satisfied with a thought that he can claim to be his own thought and which therefore is not shared by others, or is not what demands the *allegiance* of others. Man's thought is always claimed by him to be an element in universal thought containing the universal characteristics of thought or knowledge that make it true not for one particular individual but for all men. Nay, it can so transcend the barriers surrounding his own individual thinking that it may be regarded as timeless, true for ever, unaffected by the contingencies of space and time. The truth or the essence of man is to be found not in his existence as a particular being, but in his ideas and thoughts which have universal scope and meaning. This is what the *Upaniṣads* and all the great religious writings all the world over declare to be the finding of one's self in others. To extend one's own small self in a manner that it becomes universal in content and significance is the highest goal of human life. Unless, therefore, there were a life infinitely larger and wider than his, this self-transcending nature of man would be hard for us to understand. The experience of self-transcendence cannot be disputed, as it is borne out by art, literature and moral and religious experience. This self-transcending has been operating from the very beginning of his life, from the very first moment when his sensuous experience was transformed into thought or spiritual experience.

Although the individual in his experience transcends himself, there is no doubt that there is a centre of consciousness, a reality in which the ideals and values after which he aspires have reached their fullest realisation. Unless there were an infinite mind in which all that the finite mind hankers after, elevates it, and contributes to its spiritual unfoldment and moral evolution could

reach its climax of perfection, there would be no point in the finite making any progress in its ascent to the Divine. It is in this highest stage of spiritual perfection that man so identifies himself with the Divine that he becomes an entirely new being and considers his thoughts, feelings and desires not to be his own, but rather those of the Divine Being Himself of whom he is only an insignificant organ. This is the highest stage of fulfilment to which the *Bhagavadgītā* (VI. 22) refers in the following emphatic terms :—"That, on obtaining which (one) does not consider (any) other gain (to be) superior to it, and on being established in which (one) is not agitated even in consequence of great misery" 68

It is the same idea of spiritual upliftment, elevation and unfoldment, the feeling of the small private self being transformed into Universal Self that has been expressed in the oft-quoted saying of St. Paul: "I live, not yet I, but Christ liveth in me". These are spiritual experiences which are the core of religion. The individual finite self has the profound experience of his being assimilated to a higher life by which he is saved and from which he receives his content. This dependence of the finite on the Infinite Mind, its appropriation of all the values from the latter, is itself proof positive of the ontological difference between them. The Infinite and the finite are ontologically different, and there is no question of the former being treated as anything but the ideal state of the perfection of the latter. It is true that the finite mind, apart from the Infinite Mind, is an abstraction. This is because the Infinite and the finite are ontologically not one, but two.

Certainly, the view which so brings the Infinite and the finite together that the Infinite is empirically the finite and the finite is transcendentially or ideally the Infinite, does justice

68. M. Rangacharya, *Lectures on the Bhagavadgītā*, Vol. I, p. 581.

neither to the true nature of the Infinite, nor to that of the finite mind. In religious life, the Infinite has been represented as being not far away from the finite, but abiding in the citadel of the very heart of man, which is a clear indication of Its immanence in the finite mind and which thus proves once for all their distinctness. Both cannot be identified. There is between them intimacy, but not identity. The Infinite is close to the finite mind, but for this very reason it is not the same as the finite mind.

The Infinite Mind and the finite mind do not have an isolated abstract existence. We have concentrated our attention on the ideal character of the finite so that, without its reference to the Infinite Mind, its nature is not at all understandable. Just because the finite mind seeks its meaning in the Infinite Mind, the finite mind without the Infinite Mind is a centre as it were without a circumference. There is no atomic self-centred individual without a Universal Life. But the other side of the relationship between the two is no less important and significant. If the finite mind is not intelligible apart from the Infinite Mind, the Infinite Mind also could not be infinite in abstraction from the finite. The Infinite Mind without reference to the finite mind is a false or spurious Infinite. If the finite seeks the Infinite, the Infinite also seeks the finite. If the finite fulfils itself in the Infinite, the Infinite equally realises Itself in the finite.

IV. From the Infinite Mind to the Finite Mind

The spiritual conception of the Infinite, therefore, is not that of a self-contained, isolated, abstraction with a lonely existence. If the Infinite Mind is truly spiritual and if self-transcendence is the mark of Its spirituality, then the Infinite Mind is as much in need of the finite mind as the finite mind is in utter penury without the Infinite Mind.

Viśiṣṭādvaita focuses attention upon this organic relation of close intimacy between the Infinite Mind and the finite mind, between *Brahman* and *jīva*. If religion is the designation of a very close and intimate relation between the Infinite and the finite mind, then it has to do away with the self-glorified, isolated transcendence of the Infinite Mind. The Infinite Mind, therefore, which is the sheet-anchor of religious experience has organic relationship with the finite. We cannot think of true religion without this relationship of hide-and-seek between the Infinite and the finite. Rāmaṇuja has given a very moving and enthralling expression to this intimate relation between the Infinite and the finite mind by trying to emphasize that the relation of love between God and man is a reciprocal one and not a one-sided affair. God as much hankers after man as man after God.

Rāmaṇuja explains this love of God for man on the analogy of a king's solicitude for his son's welfare who, separated from his father through his own ignorance, has long been straying in wilderness without the slightest knowledge of his nature, status and destination. The double-search profits not only the finite self, but also the Supreme Will. In his *Śrī Bhāṣya*, (I. I. 4) we have these words from Rāmaṇuja :

यथा च कश्चिद्वाजकुमारो बालक्रीडामको नरेन्द्रभवनाधिष्ठातो
मार्गाङ्गुष्ठो नष्ट इति राज्ञा विज्ञातस्त्वय चाज्ञातपितृकः केनचिद्द्विज-
वयैण वर्धितोऽधिगतवेदशस्त्राण्योडशवयससर्वकल्याणगुणाकर्गस्तिष्ठन्
'पिता ते सबलोकाधिपतिः गाम्भीर्यौदार्यवान्सद्यसौशील्यशौर्यवीर्य-
पराक्रमादिगुणसंग्रहस्त्वामेव नष्टं पुत्रं दिदृक्षुः पुरवरे तिष्ठति' इति
केनाचद्भियुक्तमेव प्रयुक्तं वाक्यं शृणोति चेत् ; तदानीमेव 'अहं
तावत् जीवतः पुत्रः, मत्पिता च सबसंपत्समृद्ध' इति निरतिशयदर्श-
समन्विनो भवति । राजा च स्वपुत्रं जीवन्तमरोगप्रतिमनोहरदर्शनं
विदितसकलवेद्यं श्रुत्वाऽवाससमस्तपुरुषार्थो भवति । पञ्चाक्षदुषादाने
च प्रयतत । पञ्चाक्षावुभौ सङ्गच्छेते चेति ॥⁶⁹

(“Just as a young prince, while dallying with lads (his playmates), strays from the right track and gets out of the palace and is (thus) taken by the king (his father) to have been lost, and, not knowing his father, is brought up by a pious Brahmin, acquires knowledge of the *Vedas* and the *śāstras*, attains to the age of sixteen years, comes to possess all excellences, and when, as soon as he is reported by some trustworthy person to the effect that his father, the sovereign of all the worlds, and one endowed with qualities like dignity, generosity, affection, excellent disposition, heroism, valour, strength and the like, waits in the city, anxiously longing to see his lost son, he gets elated with unsurpassed joy thinking that he is the son of his father who is alive and who is blessed with all kinds of affluence, and the king also, on his own part, hearing that his son is alive, free from disease, comely in appearance and is at home in all the disciplines that have to be known, considers himself as one who has attained whatever is worthy of attainment, and subsequently steps forward to get him back, and finally both of them get united, even so is the Lord when delighted at the soul's home-coming ”)

Sudarśana Sūri in his *Srutaprakāśikā* has unfolded the hidden meaning of this analogy in a marvellous manner, comparing the king to the Lord, the son to the finite self, and the trustworthy person to the spiritual guide. The impressive depth of meaning and richness of spiritual content that Sudarśana Sūri ascribes to this passage of Rāmānuja remind us of the parallel parables of Jesus of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son which contain exactly similar ideas in respect of the redemptive solicitude of the Divine Father for the *jīvas*, His sons. (*The Gospel of St. Luke*, XV).

Radhakrishnan has also the same idea : “Hindu mythology looks upon God as an eternal beggar waiting for the opening of the door that he may enter into the darkness and illumine the

whole horizon of our being as with a lightning flash. It is not so much man seeking God as God seeking man." 70

The *Upaniṣads* return over and over again to the idea of *Brahman* as not only the Alpha and Omega of the world, as the source and centre of its being, but also as that whose nature is Infinite Bliss. They emphatically depict *Brahman* as bliss or *ānanda*, the attainment of which brings about a profound sense of fulfilment in the finite individual. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* makes the suggestion that religious experience bears a very close resemblance to aesthetic experience when it claims that *Brahman* is what we enjoy, since it is *Rasa* and it is by attaining *Rasa* that one experiences a profound sense of happiness and fulfilment. This is only a philosophical expression of the truth that God is love.

Love is what gives us infinite satisfaction, infinite fulfilment, and it is this very grand idea that has been expressed in so many passages of the *Upaniṣads*. It is clear from such texts that the *Upaniṣadic* thinkers, by no means, hold *Brahman* or the Infinite to be an abstract Deity. Once we bear in mind that *Brahman* is represented in the *Upaniṣadic* texts as being of the nature of infinite bliss, even though the language in which this is couched may not be expressive of personal relationship, what meaning can be attached to it other than that which expresses just this relationship of love between the Infinite and the finite? We cannot think of *Brahman* as an impersonal force or substance, once we agree with the *Upaniṣads* that *Brahman* possesses infinite bliss as Its very character and essence. In one of them it is stated that one who knows the bliss of *Brahman* is absolutely free of all fear. 71 In our early religious writings we find unmistakable

70. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 338, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1951.

71. *Bṛih. Up.* (IV. 4. 25)

evidence of love being regarded as the focus of the relationship between the Infinite and the finite mind. It is clear that the conception of the self-identical, abstract Infinite, apart from the finite, has not been put forward by the *Upaniṣads* as the foundation of the truly religious and spiritual life. Not only is the relation of the Infinite with the finite one of love, but also a lonely life appears disgusting and boring to It. It is to overcome this boredom, loneliness and self-isolation that *Brahman* transforms Himself into many or enters into the world as its very self after He has created it. That is why the body of man is said to be the temple of God (*Brahmapuram*).

V. *Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita : The Logic of Concrete Identity*

Even though our knowledge of God, of the Absolute or the Infinite Mind, is unique and differs markedly from our knowledge of all other things, we cannot say that between them there is no relation, so that our apprehension of the latter or the cognition of them does not throw any light on the nature of the Deity. It is exactly on this point that there is a parting of ways between Absolute Monism (*Kevalādvaita*) and Viśiṣṭādvaita. The uniqueness of Viśiṣṭādvaita consists in this that it lays emphasis on the immediate intuitive realisation and experience of God in one's personal life, directing us to the revelation of the Supreme Being in both Nature and history. This revelation in the external physical world and the individual self entitles us to regard Viśiṣṭādvaita as a philosophical system seeking to grasp the meaning of God *via* Nature and man. Natural theology is not the contradiction of revealed theology, because what one experiences in one's personal life receives confirmation by the evidence of the presence of God in Nature and man. The individual self is the candle of the Lord or, to vary the figure, it has been made in the image of God. It is more in the individual self, therefore, than in Nature that we can understand what the nature of the Deity is. The self is the highest reality we know,

and if we have to think as human beings, God must be at least what we are. God cannot be sub-human. We express the same truth by saying that God is personal. But personality is not a limitation imposed upon the nature of God, because it expresses what is best in the highest order of reality known to us. Next in the order of value, therefore, to God, comes man who in his turn is higher in the scale of value than the external physical world which, though inferior to the self, is nevertheless considered in Viśiṣṭādvaita to be a revelation of God. It is what reveals the will and purpose of God and provides an environment by which the finite self is shaped and from which it receives its content. Hence Viśiṣṭādvaita, in contrast to Absolute Monism, holds that transcendence connotes not the ontological exclusiveness and separateness of one form of reality from another but rather their distinction in quality or value. The philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita is not the philosophy of the absolute transcendence of the Infinite, because according to the logic of the Infinite which we have defended above, we cannot exclude the ego and the physical world from any conception of God which is religiously significant. Transcendence and immanence are correlative and they have reference to distinct realities. We cannot plausibly think of the transcendence or immanence of God without also accepting the existence of realities other than God. The transcendence and immanence of God can have meaning only by reference to the reality of both the individual self and the external physical world. Viśiṣṭādvaita attaches proportionate importance to the human ego and the external world. It teaches that we cannot avoid, in the religious context, thinking of God, the human ego and the individual self as forming an organic unity—not of course in the biological sense of suggesting change and decay in *Brahman* or the individual self, which are immutable, but rather in that of their being inseparable and each being conceived only by reference to the remaining two principles. "Antithesis in thought is no separation in being."⁷²

⁷² Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, Vol. I, p. 17.

"In the real life of thought," says Professor Aliotta, "identity does not exist apart from diversity, or unity apart from variety. We may for purposes of study consider the identical, apart from the diverse, but we must not say that the identical taken by itself possesses the sufficiency of concrete reality. Absolute identity would be death, the negation of conscious life; we can, however, conceive it without annihilating thought, inasmuch as the concrete act of cognition in which one of the terms of the identity is present differs from the successive act in which the second term is presented to us. The formula $A = A$ has meaning, because a certain diversity is understood: thought, when it passes from the first to the second A , does not remain absolutely identical: if it did, the duplication of the first A and the consequent identification would both be impossible; we should remain stationary at the first A and be unable to form any judgment. Identity is always relative, never absolute. Even in mathematics, the science in which the principle of identity is most strictly applied, there is no such thing as the establishment of relations between absolutely identical terms. There is always a certain element of diversity which renders mathematical thought fruitful and progressive, and without which it would be doomed to an isolated barren existence in each of its concepts and would be unable to establish relations between one concept and another. Mathematical equality is always identity of diversity. Two congruent triangles are not identical in every respect, but differ as to their position in space; in the arithmetical equation, $8 + 4 = 12$, the first member is not absolutely identical with the second, but differs from it inasmuch as the units of which it is composed are differently arranged. Absolute identity is a mere fiction: concrete thought advances and develops by identifying the diverse and diversifying the identical." 73

73. Professor Aliotta, *The Idealistic Reaction Against Science*, translated into English by Agnes McCaskill, pp. 412-13, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., London, 1914.

Viśiṣṭādvaita stands in direct contrast to Absolute Monism as the idea of the numerical identity of the three ultimate principles of knowledge and experience, namely, God, the individual self and the Nature, cannot be reduced to any one of them. Acosmism, Pantheism, Pan-egoism and Pan-materialism are empty abstractions which cannot give us a connected view either of common experience or even of moral and religious experience. The fallacies arising from undue emphasis on any one of these principles can be avoided only by accepting all the three principles. The interposition or mediation of *Māya* or *Avidyā* between *Brahman* and the world on the one hand and between *Brahman* and *jīva* on the other, so that the visible universe is only a projection of false *Avidyā* whose knowledge is not a real and true knowledge of the given something, but merely an idea of the false ego and the individual self which also is not real, must land us in difficulties which are ridiculous indeed. If it is involved in the very nature of *Māya* or *Avidyā* to conceal *Brahman* or God from our view, *Brahman* being always unknown to us, knowledge of *Brahman* is impossible and we cannot escape the perils of agnosticism and scepticism. Again, if our ordinary consciousness gives us real information of the object confronting it, the world, though external, is not quite intractable and inaccessible.

Viśiṣṭādvaita, of all the Vedāntic schools of thought, stands on the most solid and secure foundation of rigorous philosophical thinking which takes account of all the sides of our knowledge and of the aspects of a metaphysical and religious view of existence. In terms of Western theology, we can say that Viśiṣṭādvaita is free from the errors of deism and pantheism. It includes their merits but excludes their limitations. It maintains, like deism, the distinctness of God from the world and man, but it does not make the mistake of treating Nature and man as enjoying a self-contained existence, cut off from the love and care of God. Viśiṣṭādvaita differs in this respect from all dualistic forms of thinking, inasmuch as it upholds both the

immanence of *Brahman* in all things and also its ontological difference from them, as has been so clearly and effectively set forth in the *Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa* of *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: “He who, dwelling in all things, yet is other than all things, whom all things do not know, whose body all things are, who controls all things from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal ... He who, dwelling in the mind, yet is other than the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is, who controls the mind from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal”.⁷⁴

Pantheism and acosmism, as a matter of fact, are products of dualistic habits of thinking. Viśiṣṭādvaita maintains that matter, mind and God are distinct from each other, but they are not so opposite that their co-existence is inconceivable. The misconception that Viśiṣṭādvaita is not monistic in nature, but is rather a form of Trinitarianism (*traitavāda*) arises from the failure to grasp the relation of harmony and synthesis that exists between them. For example, Prof. Raghunath Damodar Karmarkar says: “As Rāmānuja regards everything as real, he cannot get away from the fact that in his opinion there are three real entities, howsoever one may try to camouflage this. In other words, Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita is no Advaita at all; it is not Dvaita either; it may be called ‘*Traitā*’ as a matter of fact”.⁷⁵

“To treat Viśiṣṭādvaita as an instance of *traita-vāda* is certainly a most glaring error, when Rāmānuja himself has emphasised more than once that his philosophical system is *advaita* as it advocates the supremacy and ultimacy of *Brahman*.

74. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III. 7. 15, 20, English translation in R. E. Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 117, Oxford University Press, Madras, 1968.

75. *Śrībhāṣya of Rāmānuja*, Vol. I, p. xxxii, Poona University, 1959.

The mere admission of the reality of *cit* and *acit* as distinct principles alongside of *Brahman* does not confer upon them the status of independent existence, in which case alone, *Brahman*, *cit* and *acit* being coordinate principles, Rāmaṇuja's doctrine would have approximated to the kind of *traiṭavāda* by which Prof. Karmarkar designates his philosophy. It is true that *cit* and *acit* are real, but the predicate of reality is applicable to them not in the same sense. When Rāmaṇuja always reminds us that they have existence and reality only as *prakāras*, adjectives of *Brahman*, how can they have the same status as *Brahman*?

अनः परस्य ब्रह्मणः प्रकारतया एव चिदचिद्वस्तुनः पदार्थत्वमिति ।⁷⁶

The analogy of *citraṭapa* (a many-coloured piece of cloth) is only an analogy, and nothing more is suggested by it than mere inseparable existence of the three principles.

Viśiṣṭādvaita, as a philosophy of affirmation, does not call in question the reality of any one of the three principles which are inextricably involved in experience. We fall into inexcusable errors, if any one of these three principles is dispensed with. In this philosophy of proportion, balance is maintained as regards the claims of Nature, Mind and Man. As it is from the experience of reality which enables us to refer it back retrospectively to the foundations of experience, Viśiṣṭādvaita, side by side with revealed theology, satisfies the standards and canons of natural theology also.

In the present stage of our knowledge of the progress in scientific fields, especially in physical science, we are confronted by the doctrine of the correlativity of matter and mind. One of the most eminent scientists of the present day whose researches in palaeontology have brought about a revolution, as it

76 *Śrībhāṣya*, Vol. I, p. 99, R. Venkateśvara Press, Madras, 1936.

were, in scientific thinking, teaches us that matter and mind are so unified, though distinct from each other, that we can never think of their separate existence. We hear nowadays much about the reducibility of matter to energy and of the condensation of energy into matter, from which some idolaters of science and, following in their footsteps, some philosophers having a craze for reducing all forms of existence to one form of reality, have advanced the view that everything can be understood in terms of energy. However, even though such abstractions may have their own relevance to scientific thinking, the distinction between matter and mind cannot be wiped out. We cannot, in other words, absolutely eliminate that principle in our experience by reference to which alone we can understand it. Unless there is something given, something external to the mind which is not a product of its own making, there cannot be what we call knowledge or thinking. In so far again as it is in constant confrontation with our struggle against the external environment which is not ordinarily possible for man to turn to his own use and by constant contact with which alone is man able to build up his personality, it would certainly be ridiculous to think that it is no more than a configuration of energy. The sophistications of scientific thinking have their own place and value, but as far as our ordinary consciousness is concerned, the distinction of matter and mind holds good.

“Since the arising of thought”, writes Teilhard de Chardin, “men have continually wondered and argued about the co-existence and contradictions of spirit and matter, plurality and unity: the single problem to which all the physical sciences, all philosophy and all religion fundamentally brings us back. We seem at the present day to be moving towards a solution: as always, when confronted with the most tiresome paradoxes (like that of liberty), we are forced to recognize that the question was badly framed, and that the problem does not exist. No contradiction in fact between the one and the many, if one regards things as existing in a flux of personalization: but simply

two phases (or to be more exact, two directions) in the same reality moving around us. Spirit and matter are contradictory, if isolated and symbolized in the form of abstract, fixed notions of pure plurality and pure simplicity, which can in any case never be realized. 'In nature rerum' one is inseparable from the other; one is never without the other; and this for the good reason that one appears essentially as a sequel to the synthesis of the other. No spirit (not even God within the limits of our experience) exists, nor could structurally exist without an associated multiple; any more than a centre without its circle or circumference.....So much matter is needed for so much spirit; so much multiplicity for so much unity. Nothing is lost, yet everything is created. This is all that is affirmed".⁷⁷

VI. *Viśiṣṭādvaita as a Philosophy of Proportion and Affirmation*

We shall discuss the status of material existence and of the world later, but for the present it is helpful to remember that Viśiṣṭādvaita, unlike the pantheistic doctrines of reality, gives proportionate importance to matter, but holds at the same time that it is hostile and intractable neither to the individual self on the one hand, nor to God on the other. There is no question, consequently, of any form of dualism in Viśiṣṭādvaita. Generally, it is in consequence of emphasis on the dualistic interpretation of reality that either the subject is merged in the object or the object is reduced to the subject. The opposition between them is emphasised to such an extent that their distinctness is abolished. But dualism is not overcome by reducing matter to mind or mind to matter. The relation between them is one of inseparable existence, and since they are not hostile to each other, there is no question of dualism between

77. Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, translated by J. M. Cohen, p. 57, Collins, London, 1969.

them. This way of thinking in Viśiṣṭādvaita frees it from all the difficulties of deism, because matter or the external world is not cut off from the individual self, nor is it isolated from God either. *Brahman* in Viśiṣṭādvaita is not merely the first cause of it, but is intimately involved in it as its final cause. The universe cannot be compared to a wound-up clock which goes on working without the operation of God's active power in it. There is never any moment in which the world can be said to enjoy its existence separate from God. It is exactly on this point that the relation between God and the world throws light also on the very meaning and significance of the term '*Viśiṣṭādvaita*'. Viśiṣṭādvaita refers, therefore, not only to the doctrine of *Brahman* qualified by matter and mind, but also to Its being so qualified in states both prior to and after creation. Therefore, the term '*Viśiṣṭādvaita*' refers to *Brahman* being qualified in both these states, that is to say, when there is no creation and everything exists in subtle or unmanifest form and when the phenomenal existence of the world comes into being as a result of God's will. Thus, Viśiṣṭādvaita has been interpreted to indicate the identity of the same reality in both the states in relation to the unmanifest and manifest creative order.

In Viśiṣṭādvaita which is fundamentally a realistic system in which the reality of diversity and change is admitted, time is not treated as an illusion. In fact, the reality of the self itself cannot be admitted if it is not acknowledged to be conscious of its identity in the midst of all the changing experiences it undergoes. The reality and identity of the self, therefore, can be acknowledged only in virtue of the recognition of the diversity of the experiences it undergoes.

Brahman in Viśiṣṭādvaita is not an utterly timeless reality. Its reality is not the same as that of the timeless concepts of geometry or mathematics. Such concepts cannot represent the timelessness of the spirit. Spirit is real only as being the Permanent background of changes. Changes happen in its

experiences and it is conscious of them as events taking place in it. As conscious of these changes, it is itself changeless. Changes cannot affect it. Similarly, changes take place in the individual self and non-intelligent matter, as a result of which *Brahman* passes from a previous subtle state to a posterior gross state when the creation of the world takes place. Thus *Brahman* has states and, as self, experiences them. But it must be remembered that *Brahman* Himself does not change and the changes in the ego and the non-ego do not affect Him, as the self in the body is not affected by changes in the latter. Viśiṣṭādvaita refers to this changeless identity of *Brahman* in both His subtle and gross states of the ego and the non-ego, when there is transition from a previous subtle state when there is no creation to a posterior gross state when creation takes place.

It is thus clear that in Viśiṣṭādvaita *Brahman* or Ultimate Reality is a self-determining principles or personality, for it is the mark of a spiritual reality or reality that is personal to be the cause of all changes in it as the result of self-directing intelligence and to be conscious of them, as they can be changes only by being referred to its unity. It is only personality that overcomes and transcends the dichotomy of time and timelessness, of unity and diversity and of permanence in the midst of change.

Obviously, we do not meet here with any unbridgeable contrast between time and eternity. Rāmānuja does not hold to the view that time and eternity are such mutually contradictory principles that time cannot somehow or other be a form of the being of the Absolute. As *Brahman* has states and is the ground of change, Viśiṣṭādvaita steers a middle course between the philosophy of process or flux and of the Eleatic Being which is immutable. In point of fact, since man is the meeting ground of both time and eternity and since religion cannot be an effective force in human civilization if it disassociates itself

from worldly life, being essentially a point of view of looking at things temporal from the point of view of the eternal, both these apparently contradictory principles have to be treated as complementary.

Thus the relation between time and eternity is such that we cannot conceive either of them without the other. Eternity itself is inconceivable without time and change. In fact, the word 'eternal' originally meant not being utterly without or beyond time, but that which continues in existence in or endures through time. It means 'everlasting' or as Ramanuja says it means continuance in existence in all time.

सर्वकालवर्तमानत्वं हि नित्यत्वम्।⁷⁸

If in English it means 'everlasting', in its Latin equivalent, *aeviternus*, it means etymologically 'age-long'. Hence in thinking of *Brahman* or the Ultimate Reality, if at all He is conceived to be spiritual or a self, we cannot take Him to be so utterly timeless as to exclude time altogether. He includes and transcends time in a way that change does not affect Him. This is the truth that T. S. Eliot so clearly expresses :

“ The point of intersection of the timeless
With time is an occupation for the saint.”⁷⁹

The very fact that Viśiṣṭādvaita propounds the doctrine of *Brahman* being the ground of all change and has no scruple, therefore, in predicating process and change of *Brahman* is the positive proof of its emphasis on the value the world certainly has.

78. *Śrībhāṣya*, I, p. 34.

79. *The Dry Salvages*, quoted in W. T. State, *Time and Eternity*, p. 75, Princeton University Press, New York, 1959.

Secondly, Viśiṣṭādvaita is distinguished from pantheism, because it neither refunds the reality of the whole universe into God so that the perception of the world or of all plurality and difference is a mere delusion, nor does it identify God with the universe. There is, in the philosophical framework of Viśiṣṭādvaita, emphasis laid on both identity and continuity or correlation. The world is the visible garment of God, a revelation or expression of God's power and glory. The world does not interpose itself as an obstacle to our knowledge of God. Of deism and pantheism, each starts from a premise opposite to that of the other, indicating that the truth is to be found in what they deny, side by side with what they affirm. Not being able to lay hold of the whole truth, they can find no place for the doctrine of a personal Deity. Viśiṣṭādvaita firmly upholds the doctrine of the personality of God, because the principles of matter and mind form elements or objects of His consciousness. They are not considered limitations imposed on the infinitude of God, because what impairs this infinitude is not their reality or existence, but their hostility to Him. Matter and mind are neither alien nor hostile to *Brahman*.

Thirdly, as we have emphasized frequently, since the universe never enjoys an existence independent of God, but is always subordinate to Him carrying out His purpose and manifesting it in all its modes, it cannot be what God always fights against, or an intractable reality either for the individual self or for God. Viśiṣṭādvaita avoids also the difficulties arising out of the theory of creation out of nothing, because the latter does justice neither to the infinite perfection of God, nor to the nature of the world as the expression of the eternal act of God.

The contention of certain Western writers, therefore, that Hinduism as a whole, in contrast to Christianity, is pantheism, is not justified. The charge may hold good of *Advaita*, but does not have any relevance to Viśiṣṭādvaita which emphatically

claims that our demands for unity are not satisfied if any one of these realities is written off or the lines of division between them are completely wiped out.

That *Brahman* is the material cause of the world consisting of matter and conscious souls, by no means tends to blur their mutual differences is eloquently emphasised by Rāmanuja more than once. Thus he says that just as in a variegatedly woven cloth consisting of white, black and red threads, there is no possibility of their fusion or blurring of their differences both in their causal and effectuated states, so also, there is never any fusion of the characteristic features of the enjoyer, the *jīva*, the objects enjoyed, the *acit*, and their controller, *Brahman*, both before and after creation.

ब्रह्मोपादानत्वेऽपि संघातस्योपादानत्वेन चिदचितोर्ब्रह्मणश्च
स्वभावासङ्करोऽप्युपपन्नतरः । यथा शुक्लकृष्णरक्तन्तुसंघातोपादा-
नत्वेऽपि चित्रपटस्य तत्तत्तन्तुपदेश एव शौक्यादिसंबन्ध इति
कार्यावस्थायामपि न सर्वत्र वणसङ्करः; तथा चिदचिदीश्वरसंघातो-
पादानत्वेऽपि जगतः कार्यावस्थायामपि भोक्तृत्वभोग्यत्वनियन्त-
त्वाद्यसङ्करः । 80

The conviction that neither the individual self nor the external physical world is left to itself without the care and love of God, constitutes the very foundation of the Viśiṣṭādvaita view of a personal attitude to both the universe and man. That the world and the individual self have an existence inseparable from God suggests that God is personal, because personality does not deny the reality of that by reference to which its meaning is understood. Love implies duality, but not dualism.

80. *Śrībhāṣya*, Vol. I, p. 103, R. Venkateswara edition, 1936, see also *Gīta Bhāṣya*, XIII. 3 of Rāmanuja.

It is easy to interpret the world idealistically, but very difficult to understand what idealism really means and to carry it to all its consequences. If idealism does not defend the cause of the spirituality of both man and God and both are not conceived in terms of certain contents which form the character and the essence of spiritual beings, there is hardly any distinction between materialism and idealism. What, of course, marks idealism from materialism is the stress laid by the former on spiritual values, which it is difficult for us to understand if they do not form the content of the highest in reality. God is spiritual because God is the home and the fullest realization of all values. Man as a spiritual being seeks fulfilment by appropriation of these values.

It does not seem proper to hold, as is very often done, that in *Upaniṣadic* literature, there is no proof for the perfection of human existence, resulting not so much from the uprush of the ideal possibilities of man himself, but rather through the appropriation by him of the perfections of God. There are many passages in the *Upaniṣads* which teach that though in himself man is a finite being, his perfection is understandable only in virtue of his appropriation of God's nature.

Self-consciousness is the only concept which gives true meaning to our notion of spirit and of personality. Personality is the highest spiritual category which defines the nature and content of both man and God. Visistādvaita, in contrast to *Advaita*, is a very powerful vindication of personality. Neither absolute monism nor absolute difference can be true to the concrete richness of experience, because we have neither experience of unity which is without any difference, nor do we ever come across any difference, plurality, or diversity which is conceivable without unity. Visistādvaita thinks of dualism always mediated by monism and monism being always treated as intelligible only in terms of difference. The uncompromising and rigid antithesis of matter and spirit is overcome by its

unique doctrine of the identity of body and its soul. Viśiṣṭādvaita tries to understand unity by reference to the existential intimacy of body and mind or *cit* and *acit*. Such a point of view certainly gives new meaning to both the body and the Supreme Mind. The *Upaniṣads* frequently treat the body as the city of God (*Brahmapuram*). The world or body is not therefore something to be despised, but is helpful to the spiritual unfoldment of the self and is also a medium of the manifestation of God's glory and power.

There are some philosophical doctrines which hold that God eternally undergoes modification and that the individual self and the external physical world are the results of the modification that God undergoes. The spirits and material things are involuntary expressions or are illusory appearances of the Infinite Substance. Viśiṣṭādvaita does not support these doctrines of the eternal modification of God. The conception of God undergoing constant modification and giving birth involuntarily to the finite ego and the individual self, will concern us later. For the present, it is enough to remember that since Viśiṣṭādvaita treats self-consciousness as the character of God, the possibility of the involuntary modification of *Brahman* is ruled out. Such involuntary modification can be the characteristic feature only of material substances and not of God or of spirits. Rāmaṇuja has always warned us against mistaking Viśiṣṭādvaita for any form of dualism or pantheism or emanationism.

The starting point of Viśiṣṭādvaita in a personal God as the ultimate reality and source and foundation of our existence, deals a death blow to all such irreligious doctrines. It is highly instructive to note that the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita is a response to the religious need of the human mind which can be met only by accepting and giving due importance to the three realities of God, the individual self and the world. If at all religious experience is a real expression of our experience of God, then God, Nature and Man become as it were equally

important and inescapable, like the three sides, as it were, of a triangle which is religion. There is ample scriptural support for the mutual distinction of these realities.

“Indeed, the uniqueness of Visistādvaita consists in the rational demonstration and vindication of the Supreme Mind as a self-revealing and self-determining reality. God is the purposive intelligence who causes changes in mind and matter both before and after creation. As a result of the exercise of His will, change is brought about in matter so that the world is created with an appropriate environment for the moral training and discipline of the individual souls. It is in accordance with their moral deserts that appropriate bodies and objects are created by Him. Thus God is conscious of changes that He brings about. It is the mark of personality to be conscious of changes though it is itself changeless. Only in personality are diversity and unity, permanance and change, and difference and identity united—only personality unites these dichotomies by being conscious of them. The Supreme Person in Viśiṣṭādvaita, uniting in Himself and conscious of these diametrically opposite experiences, is not an abstract, impersonal intelligence but rather a concrete, self-revealing and self-determining personality”

In the *Upanisads* not a single text or passage is to be found which denies the reality of the finite self or of the world. Of course, it is a matter of one's free choice to interpret texts bearing on the appearance of the external world and plurality and difference pantheistically. The *Upanisads*, on a closer reflection about their main intention, reveal that they do not so much deny the reality of the separate elements as their separate reality. The existence of the world, without its root in and connection with *Brahman*, is doubtless questionable. But the remedy is to be found not in questioning the reality or the existence of the latter, but in referring it back to *Brahman* or God.

The *Bhagavadgītā* gives unequivocal, categorical, recognition to the difference among these three principles :

“There are two kinds of *puruṣas* (mentioned) in the scriptures, the destructible (*kṣara*) and the indestructible (*akṣara*). The destructible class consists of all beings. The indestructible class is described as uniform and homogeneous which is the self. The Highest Person is other than these: He is described as the Supreme Self (in the Scriptures)—He who, having entered the three worlds, supports them as the immutable One and the Lord. Because I transcend the destructible (*purusa*) and am also higher than the indestructible (*puruṣa*), therefore I am celebrated as the Highest Person both in the *smṛitis* and in the *Vedas*.” 81

In his *Vedāntadīpa*, Rāmānuja takes *kṣara* and *akṣara* respectively to be *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. He points out how the individual self is intrinsically different from the non-intelligent matter and then teaches that the Supreme Person who is hostile to all inauspicious qualities and the abode of all auspicious qualities, who pervades them all in all their states, who upholds and controls them and who exists as that for whose purpose they exist, is absolutely different from all the individual selves, bound and liberated.

अचिद्वस्तुनः स्वरूपतः स्वभावनश्चात्यन्तविलक्षणः तदात्मभूतः
चेतनः प्रत्यगात्मा, तस्मात् वद्वान्मुक्तान्नित्याच्च निखिलहेयप्रत्यनीकतया
कल्याणगुणैकतानतया च, सर्वावस्थचिदचिद्व्यापकतया धारकतया
नियन्तृतया शेषितया च अत्यन्तविलक्षणः परमात्मा । 82

Having thus stated the mutual difference of the three ontological principles, Rāmānuja quotes in support of his contention the above three stanzas of the *Bhagavadgītā*. This

81. *Bhagavadgītā*, XV. 18-18.

82. *Vedāntadīpa*. 7. 1. 1.

meaning assigned to these stanzas is not affected even if *kṣara* and *akṣara* are respectively interpreted to mean the bound and the liberated individual souls : for in this context the former is overpowered by the actions and movements of non-intelligent matter, while the latter is free from them. In another place, the *Bhagavadgītā* concentrates again on the mutual difference of the three principles.⁸³ Thus it is said that God has two *prakṛti*s of His own, the lower, divided into the earth, water, fire, air and ether, and *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṅkāra* ; and the higher (which is other than the lower one), namely, the individual soul by which this universe is sustained. Then the Lord declares Himself to be the origin as well the cause of the dissolution of the whole universe.

The *Upaniṣads* also support the reality of these principles. The implications of such a point of view of thinking about the nature of the world or about God or about man must be spiritually and religiously meaningful because they emancipate philosophical thinking from the perils of scepticism and agnosticism on the one hand and from the subjectivism, illusionism and pantheism on the other, thereby trying to establish once and for all that Viśiṣṭādvaita in the final analysis of its doctrine of Reality is alone the most adequate account of the religious interpretation of Reality. Closer examination of its doctrines reveals that its superiority to all other competing philosophical creeds is proved by the fact that they are not competent to meet all religious needs that Viśiṣṭādvaita tries to do. The onus to prove its inadequacy lies on those who oppose it rather than on the exponents and proponents of Viśiṣṭādvaita itself, because it is evident that our theoretical, practical and emotional requirements are most satisfactorily met by Viśiṣṭādvaita than by any other philosophical or religious doctrine. The very fact that the religious or idealistic interpretation of existence somehow

83. *Bhagavadgītā* VII. 4-6.

or other falls back upon the principles which Viśiṣṭādvaita advocates and defends proves that both from the philosophical and religious points of view, Viśiṣṭādvaita is unique. How far it answers our needs can be assessed, judged and appreciated only when we have before our mental eyes the problems and issues which other philosophical creeds and doctrines face but which they are not able to solve. In fact, all our life, theoretical, practical and emotional, centres on the three principles of Nature, Man and God; and it is the singular merit of Viśiṣṭādvaita to recognise their importance for the moral and religious evolution of mankind both on the individual and the collective levels. Of these three reals, God or *Brahman* is the most important and significant, because our whole life is involved in our consciousness of Him. Religious consciousness is the consciousness of God and even secular consciousness draws its meaning and content only from religious consciousness. Hence, it is most appropriate for us to concentrate attention upon the nature of the Supreme Reality to which we have to turn in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE IDEA OF GOD IN VISISTĀDVAITA

I. The Meaning of the Existence of God

In our treatment of the nature of religion and of the ontological principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita, attention has been directed to the recognition of the necessity of the existence of God mainly from a theoretical point of view. The main purpose has been to show that our very existence is impossible without the existence of the Supreme Mind. Religion, as distinguished from secular consciousness and ethical life, is the recognition of the existence of the Supreme Mind. Religion has nothing to distinguish it from morality if it does not recognize the existence of God as the basis of religious consciousness. Consequently, such a view of religion as identifies it with the process of the fulfilment of only the latent possibilities of man, is grossly mistaken. On the other hand, the existence of the Supreme Mind or of the Absolute is inextricably bound up with human experience, because it is the very condition of the possibility of our whole theoretical, emotional and practical life. Such considerations, however, concentrate on the problem of God from a purely theoretical point of view, adopting the method of natural theology.

In the present chapter, we shall be concerned not so much with the establishment of the necessity of God as with the nature of God as revealed in religious experience. Here, we shall follow the records of religious experience preserved in some of the most ancient religious scriptures of the world, namely, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. The standpoint will doubtless be of Viśiṣṭādvaita, because we are to discuss the nature of God in the framework of the philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita.

Viśiṣṭādvaita parts company with *Advaita* on this problem. According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, it is not enough merely to affirm the existence of the Absolute or of the Supreme Mind, because mere assertion of the existence of God carries no meaning for religious experience. It may be said in this connection that Buddhism, *Advaita* and Viśiṣṭādvaita are all chronological and logical developments in the evolution of the idea of God in Indian thought and culture. This corresponds to a parallel development in Western philosophy, as exemplified in the scepticism of David Hume followed by Hegel's absolute idealism, which in its turn was supplemented by the insights of religious thinkers who built upon them the superstructure of the Deity.

Looking at the development of philosophical and religious thought in India, we find that the Buddhist philosophy of nihilism, illusionism and universal flux was repudiated by Śaṅkarācārya's *Advaita*. To meet the Buddhist philosophy on its own ground, *Advaita* focused attention on the demonstration of the impossibility of even the experiences of illusion, unless there is a permanent background behind them pointing to the existence of an Absolute Mind. Perhaps, the urgency did not relate so much to vindication of the existence of realities other than the Absolute Mind as to the necessity of showing that even the experience of mere flux and of the phenomenon of illusion would be impossible without a permanent background behind them.

Advaita Vedānta differs from Buddhism in this fundamental contention, namely, that even such phenomena as those of change and flux and illusion require for their possibility a permanent background and an eternal reality behind them. Śaṅkarācārya seems to stop short with the establishment of the reality of the Supreme Reality, trying all the while to point out somewhat after the fashion of the Mādhyamika logic that it is impossible for human thought to express with any amount of certainty the nature of such a reality.

Ramānuja, who appeared on the philosophical scene about three centuries after Śaṅkarācārya, had before him, as the background of the development of his theistic philosophy, the disastrous consequences and heresies in which the non-dualistic philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya had culminated leading to the formulation of acosmic, sceptical and subjectivistic systems of individual non-dualist thinkers, who, while accepting the fundamental thesis of *Advaita Vedānta*, advanced their own original points of view by laying stress on this or that side of the non-dualistic doctrine of the relation of *Brahman* to the individual self and to the world. In these developments, one can easily see the fatal consequences following from a philosophy for which there is nothing real except *Brahman*. Rāmānuja has triumphantly argued that there is no meaning in the mere assertion of the existence of *Brahman*, if nothing can be said about Its nature. In fact, the problem of the mere assertion of the existence of God or the Absolute Mind cannot be abstracted from the problem of the determination of such a reality. Rāmānuja, therefore, concentrates on the nature of the Deity and, for this purpose, he calls in the aid of religious experience as set forth in early Hindu scriptures like the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the Tamil *Prabandham* of the Āzhvārs. Religious experience certainly is not the experience of God as a mere unknown *x*, for there is undoubtedly no point in experiencing anything which has no determination whatsoever. If religious experience is the highest of the experiences of which man is capable, then it must be the richest and most concrete and also be a revelation of at least some aspects and dimensions of Reality, however, impossible it may be for man, confined to the ordinary level of consciousness, to fathom the depth and mystery of this Divine Being. That is why religious experience proclaims that Reality is not something that merely exists, but is also self-conscious and is the source and centre of all pleasures and happiness that we experience. If the Highest Reality is merely existent, so that it stands on the same level as the ordinary things of the world, then it cannot be the source and destiny of the world. The religious thinkers

of the *Upaniṣads* were sure that *Brahman* or God is of the nature of mind, that is revealed in self-consciousness and possesses bliss as its nature. Hence, the consciousness of what the nature of God must be, is inextricably bound up with the consciousness of His existence.

These two problems, therefore, of the existence of God and of the determination of His nature are, as a matter of fact, one and the same problem looked at from different points of view. We cannot assert the existence of anything and, for the matter of that, of the existence of God without also being sure of His nature being revealed to us. This does not mean, however, that human knowledge can claim omniscience as regards the nature of God, because if human knowledge is nothing short of omniscience, there is nothing to distinguish man from God. But, again, our knowledge falling far short of omniscience, is not completely indistinguishable from ignorance of the nature of God, so that there is no warrant for any statement about His nature and we can only say that we know nothing about God except that He exists. Mere assertion of the existence of God cannot mean anything for religious experience, because the very term or expression, 'religious experience', implies direct confrontation with something which is supremely real and therefore possesses a character which marks it off from all other things. Religious experience mediates between agnosticism and omniscience. While on the one hand it tells us that it is absurd to say that we know nothing of Him, on the other hand it is equally blasphemous to claim that our knowledge of God is so thorough and complete that it entitles us to assert that we know all the details of the mysteries of His being

It has been already pointed out that although the consciousness of God or of the Infinite is first in the order of nature, it is last in the order of understanding. There is no knowledge of the world or, for the matter of that, of any object, which is not also at the same time the knowledge of the self or of the

subject, and no knowledge of the object and the subject, of the world and the self, without the knowledge of the Infinite or God. Hence, it is not quite correct to hold that agnosticism can be a reasonable attitude in metaphysics and theology. Just because of the fact that God or the Infinite or the Supreme Mind is inextricably involved in all our theoretical and practical knowledge, just because His existence is of the same kind as the air we breathe, our consciousness of it is not clear to us unless we reflect upon the nature of our theoretical and practical interests. The *Upaniṣads* emphatically claim that the existence of God is the ground or the basis of our being or existence and that any one who casts doubt on this basic principle or fact of our existence, ceases to exist. "Non-existent indeed does he become who knows *Brahman* to be non-existent. But if anyone knows Him to exist, they know him as existing in virtue of that knowledge".

असन्नेव स भवति असद्ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत्, अस्ति ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद,
सन्तमेनं ततो विदुः । 84

Similarly, it is said that there would be no point or pleasure in life, unless the source of our life were not itself delightful or bliss. "Who indeed would inhale, and who indeed would exhale (with delight) if there were no bliss in this supreme space? This one, indeed, gives delight to all".

को ह्येवान्यात्कः प्राण्यात्, यदेष आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात्,
एष ह्येवानन्दयाति । 85

In all such experiences, not only do the seers of the *Upaniṣads*, the mystics, sages and prophets seem to have triumphantly and categorically affirmed the existence of God as

84. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II. 6. 1.

85. *Ibid.* II. 7. 7.

the basic presupposition of their own existence, but they have also argued that it is the very ground and content of our experience. We can no more escape the presence of God, than we can jump out of our own shadows. Hence, as far as the problem of the existence of God is concerned, deep reflection reveals Him as an object of our immediate intuition.

God is given, as the object or content, doubtless, of our experience, one who always confronts us, though of course not in the manner in which the objects of our ordinary experience enter into our consciousness. Of course, the demand that the Infinite or God, if at all we can claim to know Him, must be known to us in the manner in which we know the objects of our ordinary consciousness, is ridiculous because it wipes out the staggering contrast between the two. If the finite and the Infinite belong to different orders and ranks, our knowledge of them cannot be of the same kind or pattern. Logic does not bring into existence *ab initio* our knowledge of the existence of the Infinite Mind or God. It only makes our consciousness of it explicit or rather, consolidates and fortifies our knowledge of Him or elevates it from the unconscious to the conscious level.

II. Science and the Existence of God

The problem of the existence of God and of our direct knowledge of Him is certainly not a problem of scientific knowledge. God is the name of the principle which is supposed to account for the whole of the reality and existence of all things and beings that we can possibly perceive, think of and imagine, including thus the whole compass of our experience. But sciences concentrate upon restricted fragments of the whole of our experience and reality. Whereas, therefore, the question of the existence of the knowledge of God is one that concerns the whole of experience and the whole of reality, scientists and the philosophers following in their footsteps treat it as a problem which science alone can solve. But to say that science can give

the final verdict in this matter is like saying that a part is the same as the whole. Sciences concentrating on fragments of reality are not competent to pronounce any judgment on the problem of the knowledge and existence of God. Religious consciousness is not scientific consciousness or secular consciousness and, therefore, unless we indiscriminately and arbitrarily identify the different orders of reality and different provinces of human knowledge concerned with them, there is no warrant for the arrogant, dogmatic denial of the existence of God when the astronomer turns his telescope on the whole universe and does not find God anywhere

The whole problem of the existence of God as treated by scientists must be acknowledged to be an example of their unwarranted intrusion into a field which is completely beyond the jurisdiction of science. God is not an external reality and is not to be experienced as existing in space and time. Religious thinkers and seers have always been reminding us of the necessity to search for Him or see Him within our own souls; and this procedure of seeking God seated within the citadel of our own hearts is no less a verifiable experience than the experiments conducted by the scientist in his laboratory. As a matter of fact, science is the name we give to any kind of knowledge which is systematic, connected, and is also verifiable. Again, there are sciences and not one science. Methods peculiar to one particular science cannot be adopted in other sciences. The method applicable to the study of inorganic matter in physics and chemistry cannot be adopted in biology in which the subject-matter is the living body which is qualitatively different from material atoms.

Reality cannot be reduced to mere quantitative relations which form the subject-matter of natural science. Qualitative differences no less than quantitative relations are undeniable aspects of our experience. Our interpretation of human experience must do equal justice to them. Quantity and quality

are so inseparably related together that we cannot understand one of them without the other. The whole course of the development of Western philosophy for the last several centuries has been a pointer in the direction of the futility of the attempt to reduce the subject-matter of science to mere quantitative relations. Modern Western philosophy has blindly followed the footsteps of science and, under the leadership of Newton and Galileo, reduced everything to matter and motion.

Errol E Harris observes : “ ‘The universe,’ Hobbes declared, ‘that is, the whole mass of all things that are, is corporeal, that is to say, body, and hath dimensions of magnitude, namely, length, breadth, and depth; also every part of body is likewise body, and hath the like dimensions, and consequently every part of the universe is body and that which is not body is no part of the universe’. Changes were to be explained solely in terms of matter and motion; and mechanical accounts of natural phenomena, expressed in quantitative terms, came to be regarded as the only proper form of scientific explanation. Measurement was the means of investigation and mathematics the supreme instrument of scientific discovery.

“ And what of the mind? Was that to be explained also in terms of matter and motion? Some thinkers, notably Gassendi and Hobbes, adopted the view that it was, strangely oblivious of the difficulties in which any such view must immediately become involved. Sensible qualities, Hobbes asserts, are in the object nothing but motions of matter. ‘Neither in us’, he continues, ‘are they anything else, but diverse motions; for motion produceth nothing but motion. But their appearance to us is fancy, the same waking as dreaming.’ ”⁸⁶

86. Errol E. Harris, *Matter, Mind and Modern Science*, pp. 118-119, Allen & Unwin Ltd, New York, 1968.

By such an argument matter itself without the discriminating notions involved in its conception was reduced to a mere unknown *X*. The conclusion that one can legitimately draw from the exiguousness of such thinking is that the qualitative differences of things in our knowledge and interpretation of them cannot be easily dispensed with. Reality is hierarchical in nature, and there are many levels of it which are qualitatively different from one another and are ranked by us as high or low. If quantitative relations alone defined their nature, all things would be of the same order and there would be no point in choosing some of them and rejecting the rest. This inevitably brings us to the problem of value in our experience. Value is as much part of our experience as quantitative relations are.

The hierarchical order of reality ranging from inorganic matter to spirit, with life, mind and consciousness in between the two extremes, is demonstrated by the undeniable evidence of qualitative distinctions characterising them. Reality, therefore, while it may be supposed to be one continuous process or plan, is nevertheless characterised by qualitative differences and it is from our knowledge of it in so many forms of it that we can formulate a conception of its nature. The nature of reality is not so simple as the natural scientist takes it to be. Even he cannot dispense with the notion of qualitative differences, if he is fair to the subject-matter he deals with. Physics, chemistry, botany, psychology, geology and other such sciences are examples of different grades of reality with qualitative differences among the subjects they deal with. In fact, it is their qualitative differences that compel and justify their respective fields of study. If reality were of the same order, if all things stood on the same level and were reducible to mere quantitative relations, our value experience and our knowledge of the qualitative differences being mere delusions or a phantom of our imagination, there would certainly be no point in knowing anything. The very impulse to enquiry, research, study or interpretation of things has involved in it their intrinsic

distinctions which are understandable only in terms of their distinctive traits and characteristic features.

Hence Rāmanuja in his attack on *Advaita Vedānta* takes up seriously the question whether reality is characterised, so to say, by mere 'existence' or 'being'. He says that qualitative differences in things are grounded in their very nature and that the differences of our interests and desires with respect to things we want, cannot be explained but for their distinctive characteristic features serving or thwarting our needs.

अपि च सन्मात्रग्राहित्वे 'घटोऽस्ति' 'पटोऽस्ति' इति विशिष्ट-
विषया प्रतीतिर्विरुध्यते । अदि च सन्मात्रातिरेकिवस्तुसंस्थानरूप-
जात्यादिलक्षणो भेदः प्रत्यक्षेण न गृहीतः, किमित्यभ्वार्थी महिषदर्शने
निवर्तते । सर्वास्तु प्रतिपत्तिषु सन्मात्रमेव विषयश्चेत् ; तत्तत्प्रतिपत्ति-
विषयसहचारिणस्सर्वे शब्दा एकैकप्रतिपत्तिषु किमिति न स्मर्यन्ते । ४७

Hence, in our search for the ground of our being or existence, it is not enough for us to assert merely that the infinite is there: the question of the determination of its nature is also unavoidable. But, if in this way our experience is inextricably bound up with the knowledge of the different forms of reality, the question what must be the ultimate nature of it cannot be ignored. Here again, there is a parting of ways between the method of philosophy and religion on the one hand and that of science on the other. The scientist seeks the explanation of the more in terms of the less. It is true that for a comprehensive understanding of the nature of reality it must be analysed into its minutest details, parts and fragments; but it is nevertheless more essential that we must not overlook the qualitative differences of them. Unquestionably it is these

which have initiated and compelled the enquiry, and scientific explanation can be complete only if it reaches back to the point from which it has started. Be that as it may, the method which the scientist adopts, is that of reducing even the most complex organisations of things to their simplest elements, his pronouncement on the nature of them being on the basis of what he finds to be the truth regarding the latter. Notwithstanding the regressive method of the scientist, it is undeniable that his procedure succeeds with respect to the structure of things at lower levels of reality. But it proves completely barren if he pursues it in his attempt to investigate and determine the nature of the higher orders of reality. When, for example, our object of study is a machine or an aggregate of material particles, the examination of its constituent elements throws light on the nature of it, because the complex structure is qualitatively not at all different from each of the constituent elements. But the same method is completely ineffective and misleading when we proceed to understand the nature of structures which are organic in nature and in which no dividing walls can be set up between the part and the whole. In such spheres where reality manifests itself in organic structures and wholes, the futility of the scientific procedure of reducing the higher forms of it to their lower elements becomes manifest. The question, after all, is what we should start with. Should we explain the higher in terms of the lower or the lower in terms of the higher? Does the more explain the less, or does the less explain the more?

III. Nature of the Highest Unity.

In this way, for the apprehension and determination of the nature of the universe as a whole and in order to account for all the forms and degrees in which it manifests itself, we are obliged to account for all of them, not by throwing overboard the principle of continuity, but by taking into account the highest and ultimate product in which the whole process culminates.

The process in which the reality reveals itself, cannot be regarded as endless, because the very fact that the whole series of facts, events or phenomena is a process means that it must aim at the fulfilment of a certain end. This end may be rightly supposed, as Aristotle urged, to be present in the very beginning of the process. Nothing not already involved there can evolve from something. If we put this question to ourselves, we must ask what completes the process and what may therefore be acknowledged to be manifesting itself in all the forms of reality gradually and progressively, in an ascending scale of values in the whole process

The question of the nature of the world that confronts us is not the question about a form of reality that is finished and closed. In fact, it has to be accepted by all that the first form of reality that confronts us and on the basis of which alone we can form any conception of the nature of reality by consistent and systematic thinking is the world. The world comes first in the order of knowledge and it is from the nature of the world as a whole, revealing itself in a hierarchical order of values, that we can form any conception of the reality manifesting itself through it. This question of reality manifesting itself through the world stands on the same level with the question of reality manifesting itself in our physiological activities. The knowledge of the world outside and the knowledge of our physiological responses to stimuli which are matters of our direct experience, stand on the same footing, and the problem of their real nature and of any reality expressing itself through them must be taken to be fundamentally the same.

Man possesses reason which, if we define its nature, is that principle in him which aims at organising the diversity of materials it receives from outside and constantly raises the question if there is any principle of unity immanent in them. In fact, all our knowledge is nothing but an attempt at a systematization of apparently chaotic, amorphous and unrelated data

of our experiences. Reason tries to discover if there is any principle of unity working in them. Now this urge of reason in man for unity in his experiences and in the world outside is an unceasing one, and man's desire for it cannot be satisfied until and unless it lays hold of that form of unity which silences all our queries.

No doubt it is a fact that in the lower levels of reality, we come across forms of unity which, as a matter of fact, are not illustrations of real unity: because in them the elements of which they are composed are externally related to one another, having no vital connection among themselves, so that the presence or absence of any one of them cannot exert any tangible effect on the nature of each one of them. As we ascend higher and higher in the scale of being, we find that reality expresses itself in a form of unity in which the parts are so intimately and vitally related to one another that they cannot be disjoined without affecting the components themselves of which the whole is constituted. This form of unity is manifestly different from the form of unity known to us at the mechanical level in which we have no real unity, but rather a sandheap form of unity designated as a mechanical aggregate. Mechanical unity is no real unity, because the only unity on which we can fall back for grasping the nature of the world as a whole, is organic unity, in which the whole is not distinguishable and separable from the parts, nor the parts from the whole, nor again any one part or component from the remaining parts or components and the multiple relations by which they are bound together and which form part of their being.

All sciences are rationalisations of our experience which by the very nature of the requirements of the subject-matter of their investigation aim at discovering and interpreting unities in their specialised fields. The different branches of science depending in their specialised studies upon the many fragments of reality into which they divide their subject-matter, must

reject much material which is not relevant to the immediate subjects of their enquiry. The unity at which they arrive in their special fields must be only an imperfect, partial and fragmentary sort of unity with which the human mind cannot be satisfied in its perennial search, conscious or unconscious though it may be, for that ultimate unity which solves all its problems and silences all its questions.

This very question has been raised again and again in so many *Upaniṣads*. There is an interesting dialogue, for example, in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. 8) between a father and a son when the latter, having learnt all the sciences and arts, returns home, puffed up in his pride and with a show of conceit in his face. He is rightly greeted by the former with the question whether all his learning has enabled him to know that by knowing which all things become known. Evidently, in a question like this, which is raised here and there in all the *Upaniṣads*, we meet with the fundamental problem of that ultimate unity, that highest form of it which must be supposed to be an organic one and which reveals itself in the whole process of the world so that the knowledge of it is so all-embracing that it reveals all forms of reality; for which reason, it may be said, there is no dualism between that which expresses itself and all the forms which are its expressions.

The very fact that a question such as this aims at the knowledge of all things consequent upon the knowledge of the highest form of unity expressing itself in them implies the fundamental assumption of the organic unity of all things, a unity that is not abstract or empty, but rather the most concrete one.

Such a question, *prima facie*, does not carry any suggestion of the knowledge of reality in a form that, while it succeeds in getting us to that ultimate unity of which all forms of being are revelations or expressions, is itself either not revealed to us or,

if at all, revealed through manifestations that cannot be held to be real. This clarification of the form in which the question has been often formulated in the *Upaniṣads* is necessary, because it has become customary in many scholarly interpretations and studies to frame it in a manner that does not do justice to the spirit underlying the philosophical problem. While the question repeatedly asked in many of the *Upaniṣads* has been set forth with the intention of knowing all things consequent upon the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, the latter has been understood to exclude rather than include the former. Of course, there is no point in knowing this ultimate form of reality, if it does not enable us to apprehend or throw light on its multiple manifestations. It is rather these multiple expressions of it which prompt the enquiry of the reality expressing itself in them. So, the question doubtless is regarding the nature of the unity which must be organic, so that, concurrently with the knowledge of it, we are able to know all its expressions and revelations. There is, in the formulation of questions like this, absolutely no suggestion of the denial of the revelations of the Ultimate Reality which is taken by us to be a self-revealing and self-determining principle.

The enquiry in the *Upaniṣads* starts with the entities and facts perceived in the external world. The question which pertinently points to the immediate presence of these things (*Sarvam idam*), manifested in plurality and diversity and designated by the enquirers directly after the manner of natural theology, is about the nature of the unity revealed in them. Just because the question starts with the acknowledged reality of finite things and beings and plurality and difference, it cannot be supposed that the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* had in their minds any intention to outgrow this manifest awareness of the perceived world.

It follows that they did not consider this world to be a mere mechanical aggregate or a collection of things with mere

external relations binding them to one another. In such a completely nominalistic world, no knowledge is possible, nor can any principle or law of the manner or the way in which things behave be formulated. The thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* solve this problem of the nature of the world, the object of their direct immediate intuition, by reference to that principle of unity behind it which is organic in nature. Reality is a connected system, in which each part implies the whole. Just because the highest unity is in this way revealed in each of its parts and these parts again are not understandable on the one hand without their relations to one another and, on the other, to the whole, we cannot know them without knowing the unity which reveals itself through them, nor the principle of unity itself without its expressions and revelations. "The hasty logic which declares because the one is the real, the many are an illusion, is corrected in the view that the one reveals itself in the many".⁸⁸

In all such questions, enquiries and the formulation of the problems regarding the nature of the ultimate unity, the conviction of the *Upaniṣadic* thinkers that the ultimate unity is organic in nature which reveals itself in the world and that plurality and difference is also real, is so manifestly clear that there is absolutely no warrant for the view often ascribed to them that when they think of the knowledge of *Brahman*, they hold it to be that principle of unity which is so absolute that it is completely exclusive of the reality of all plurality and difference.

In traditional *Vedāntic* interpretations, this fundamental idea is customarily ignored. But it seems necessary to grasp the full meaning of the proposition for understanding the all-comprehending nature of Reality implied in the formulation of this basic problem of the ultimate unity raised in the *Upaniṣads*.

88. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 110.

Rāmānuja, therefore, is perfectly right in holding, in accordance with the reasoning adopted by us above, that the unqualified denial of plurality and difference in the *Upaniṣads* on which *Advaita Vedānta* lays stress, is utterly unwarranted and that the conventional habit of mind which glories in extracting an utterly acosmic philosophy out of it, is utterly out of tune with its real spirit. This point will engage our attention again during our treatment of the nature of the external world as conceived in Viśiṣṭādvaita in the next chapter. But for the present, it is enough to bear in mind that the nature of the ultimate unity or of *Brahman* conceived by the *Upaniṣads*, is certainly not an abstract one. If on the one hand it is far from the spirit of the *Upaniṣads* to think of the world as a mechanical aggregate or a collection of things, on the other hand it cannot be admitted that *Brahman* in their view is exclusive of the reality of it. The very etymological meaning of the term '*Brahman*' points to its being a self-revealing, self-manifesting and self-determining principle. "It is not an abstract monism that the *Upaniṣads* offer us", concedes Dr. Radhakrishnan. "There is difference but also identity. *Brahman* is infinite not in the sense that it excludes the finite, but in the sense that it is the ground of all finites. It is eternal not in the sense that it is something back beyond all time, as though there were two states temporal and eternal, one of which superseded the other, but that it is the timeless reality of all things in time. The absolute is neither the infinite nor the finite, the self or its realisation, the one life or its varied expressions, but is the real, including and transcending the self and its realisation, life and its expression. It is the spiritual spring which breaks, blossoms and differentiates itself into numberless finite centres. The word '*Brahman*' means growth, and is suggestive of life, motion and progress, and not death, stillness or stagnation."⁸⁹

89. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 173.

It is exactly these characteristic features of *Brahman* which the *Upaniṣadic* thinkers are careful not to omit to emphasise, whenever they are concerned with the discussion, interpretation and understanding of its nature in relation to the world. None the less, this has unfortunately escaped the critical attention of thinking minds leading to the misleading conception that the outlook vindicated in them is pantheistic, acosmic and other-worldly, and that God, or the principle of unity taught in them, is hardly distinguishable from abstract identity.

Thus, it can be said that when the *Upaniṣads* refer to the unreality of the world, or speak of the plurality and difference of which it consists as being false, they combat the ordinary secular consciousness of their separation from the whole to which they belong and as related to which alone they can continue in their existence. What is declared as false is not the reality of parts, of plurality and difference as such, but only of parts, plurality and difference having an independent existence and not having a dependent and derived life. *Brahman* is the first and the last principle to which all reality, all things and beings must be traced back. It is that from which all comes, to which all ultimately returns and by which everything is sustained in its existence.

Brahman or God, the Absolute, the Supreme Mind is thus both the first and the final cause of all things, that from which all things originate and that to which ultimately they return or, as stated in the words of the Christian Bible, it is that "in which we live, move and have our being".⁹⁰

God is the name we give to that principle on which all finite existence depends and by which it is brought into existence. Causation is not only the explanation of the being or existence

of a thing. It also comprises the purpose or end for which the thing is brought into existence, especially when the explanatory principle is mind. If God is the principle responsible for the creation of the cosmos inclusive of the finite self, He must also be the purpose for which it exists. It is for the realisation of the purpose of God that the individual self exists. God's mind cannot be a purposeless mind, although He has no purpose of His own preparatory to His perfection and fulfilment. The source of a thing is also its end and ultimate resort and resting place. There can be no watertight division between the first cause and the final cause

The *Upaniṣad* declares : " So just as those who do not know the field do not get the treasure of gold hidden underneath it even though they move upon it again and again, so all creatures here go day by day to the world of *Brahman* but do not find it ; for truly they are carried away by what is false".⁹¹

That, therefore, our whole life is grounded in the ultimate or highest unity which in religious and philosophical language we designate *Brahman* or God is so obvious a fact that just because of its immediateness and directness we are ordinarily oblivious of it. We usually blot out from our consciousness that which is a matter of immediate presence to us. All thinking, feeling and willing, all forms in which our consciousness, our whole mental life, our personality expresses itself, is inextricably bound up with this all-comprehending Supreme Mind or Absolute. It is, therefore, puerile to say that reflection upon our consciousness does not lead to a reasonable belief in the existence of God as an all-comprehending principle of unity in which our life is involved. That there is such a principle even the downright agnostic cannot deny. It is immaterial what name he gives to it, if he is ready to admit that there is a system

and order, which is revealed in the world outside and in our whole life itself. To believe in God, is therefore, not to put faith in the existence of some occult or mysterious entity, but rather to recognize that there is at the root of our existence and of the existence of the world a principle of unity in whose absence everything would appear to be an unintelligible paradox, an utterly purposeless, meaningless movement of material particles.

IV. Ultimate Reality as a Self-Revealing and Self-Determining Principle

The question hotly debated in theological writings in regard to the nature of this ultimate reality at the root of the universe is the question not regarding its personality or impersonality, but how its nature must be in order that the account we give of it may fit in with our experience. The problem, therefore, of the nature of the Supreme Mind or God cannot be separated from the problem of His existence. Human experience can alone be our starting point in this matter. The regressive or scientific method of tracing things back to their ultimate components cannot give us any clue to the nature of this highest unity. The nature of the process is revealed in the product in which it culminates rather than in the initial forms in which it expresses itself. The process has to be treated as one whole, as one movement of one single reality, and emphasis on the end to which it leads can alone give us any clue to its nature. While we do not question the validity of the scientific method of reductive analysis, the validity of the attempt to determine the nature of the highest unity in the light of its final form cannot be dismissed as based on an unreasonable assumption. Both methods of enquiry have their own appropriateness and applications, and in their respective spheres the truths they determine cannot be questioned. After all, scientific experience is also part of human experience, and the scientist is obliged to explain the characteristic features of the latter.

Now, if we ask what the ultimate form is in which the whole process of reality expresses itself, the answer would inevitably be that it is mind, of which all the phenomena or events in the world can be supposed to be revelations. If it is the more that is the explanation of the less, and if it is always a reasonable step to start with the more rather than with the less to explain anything, we must admit that it is the self which explains the origin of all things. Idealism and realism, materialism and spiritualism, science and religion are only complementary ways and methods of looking at things. It must be granted that reality can be looked at variously, from all possible points of view. However, when we are concerned with the nature of that reality which is the focus and content of religious experience, we cannot but admit that the ultimate unity behind and beneath the universe must be of the same nature as the human mind.

In the *Upaniṣads* and in all religious writings, it is the self or the mind which has been invariably acknowledged to be the source and explanation of all reality. But while it is customary to acquiesce in the view that no other interpretation or explanation of the world than the idealistic or the religious one, can be adequate to the requirements of all the levels of our knowledge and experience, the notion of self or mind which solves all the problems with which we are confronted is not usually understood in the manner it ought to be. Therefore, in our effort to determine the nature of this highest unity or reality which we term the Absolute or God, we must be clear about the meaning we can attribute to it. There is no point in saying that the universe can be adequately explained by reference to the self as the highest reality at the root of it, if it is emptied of all its contents and meanings in the light of which alone we can understand its nature. This warning is necessary because we are familiar with an inveterate habit on the part of philosophers and theologians to interpret the notion of the self in such a way that it ceases to carry any meaning in the context of religious experience.

It is precisely this question which has been raised by Rāmānujacārya in his debate on the validity of the concept of an indeterminate, impersonal *Brahman*, which for *Advaita Vedānta* is the ultimate reality, the sole explanation of the universe. Rāmānuja rightly says that we must first of all decide what after all we mean by the very notion or concept of self. If *Brahman* is a spirit, we must first be certain as to the meaning we can legitimately attribute to it and which must be supposed to constitute its content. The question, that is to say, which Rāmānuja puts to the *Advaitin* is not whether all reality is to be explained by reference to or by tracing all things back to *Brahman*, but what must be its nature or content, so that the conception we may form of it may not be incoherent, but fulfil all our theoretical demands.

Hence, it may be asked if by that highest unity or ultimate reality, which is at the root of the world, we mean anything other than the Supreme Mind which is a self-revealing and self-determining principle. The mind, as we know it from our own experience, is a self-revealing and self-determining principle. Our own experience bears testimony to the fact that we exist for ourselves as distinguished from all other things which exist for us and not for themselves. Other things, again, are not self-determining in nature in that while they are determined by so many external conditions, circumstances and causes, we ourselves are relatively free from such encroachments upon our freedom. Even though, in certain moments of our existence, we feel that we are determined by circumstances beyond our control, our consciousness of our freedom is nevertheless there and it never leaves us. This is what we mean when we say that the human personality is a self-determining principle. In other words, this consciousness, this permanent awareness of our distinction from all other things and of our freedom, constitutes the content and meaning of the human personality. Self-consciousness is the distinctive mark of the human personality. Therefore, the only meaning that we can assign to the notion of self is that of self-

consciousness which is indicated by the personal pronoun 'I'. Nothing that does not feel itself to be 'I', nothing to whom 'I' is not the form in which it is aware of itself, can be self. The question, therefore, is whether it is this notion of the self as the 'I', or anything else that can be a reasonable explanation of the universe and whether, with any principle short of it, we can be satisfied as regards the requirements of religious experience.

The idealistic or spiritualistic interpretation of the world even in conformity to the demands of scientific explanation and standards of scientific methods cannot gloss over the obvious fact that the emergence of mind or the ego at the end of the process completes it and gives it meaning which it did not previously possess. Therefore, in the cosmic process the mind that should be able to comprehend it must be supposed to be the characteristic feature of the process itself. That which is at the end is also at the beginning. If mind is there in Nature from the very beginning, it is not mere Nature that can be the explanation of the universe, but rather mind already involved in Nature. We may also say that the process which fulfils itself in the emergence of mind is already mental, in that it is only as mind that it can explain the world. This mind, however, which is at the root of the universe and is involved in the whole process of it, is nothing short of self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness is the highest reality known to us. Personality as revealed in man is the highest reality; and if any meaning can be attached to the Supreme Mind at the root of the world which, besides explaining it, also explains our experiences, it must be personal. We have to choose between the two alternatives either of a pure, unqualified absolute principle of indifference or of the one in terms of which the qualitative differences of experience, which must form part of any conception of reality and account for the concrete richness of the perceived world and distinguish the different departments of human knowledge and experience, can be rendered intelligible. The

Psalmist says:—"Is he deaf, the God who planted hearing in us; is he blind, the God who gave eyes to see?"⁹² In the *Sophist* we have the following dialogue on the nature of the Real:

Stranger: O heavens, shall they easily persuade us that absolute being is devoid of motion and life and soul and intelligence? That it neither lives nor thinks, but abides in awful sanctity, mindless, motionless, fixed?

Theaetetus: That would be a terrible admission, Stranger.⁹³

The problem, therefore, with regard to the nature of the highest unity or the highest reality manifested in human experience and in the universe at large is the problem of the spirit or self-consciousness or we might say, the problem of the self. If on the one hand the materialistic explanation robs the world process of all its meaning and value and reduces it to an utterly impoverished process of mechanistic indifference with no room in it for values or qualitative differences, on the other hand the idealistic view of it which, even though after the fashion of Spinoza, treats the self or the spirit as the fundamental starting point, falls nevertheless into the same pit of fixed indifference, if it is emptied of all its contents in terms of which alone we can form any conception of what it means for an entity to be spiritual. Howsoever we may stretch this concept of the self to its uttermost abstraction, we cannot compromise with any view which insists on thinking of it in terms lower than those applicable to the human personality.

"The greater does not arise from the less, only the higher explains the lower". Garrigou-Lagrange argues on the basis of

92. *Psalms* xciv.

93. Plato, *Sophist*, 248 c.

this principle that it is only the first being conceived as self that can be the reasonable source and explanation of all reality by which we are confronted. Just because the world contains living beings, God must have life; just because there are intelligent living beings, God must be intelligent; just because there are principles of reason, God must also be the eternal abode of immutable truth; because there are human experiences of such values as morality, justice, holiness and charity, God must be moral, just, good and holy Himself.

It is from the human experience that we start, and we cannot think of the ultimate principle in any way other than what is true of the human personality. This is not tantamount to thinking of God in terms of human weaknesses and frailties and limitations, because God is acknowledged to be the very acme of all possible perfections and values after which man can only aspire.

The alternative to thinking of God as an impersonal principle is really bringing it down to the sub-human level. When, therefore, Rāmānujācārya started a vigorous battle of protest against the *Advaita Vedānta* conception of Reality as *Vīroḷeṣa Brahman*, he rightly put before us the question concerning the meaning we can possibly assign to the term, 'ātman' or 'spirit'. It is exactly this very problem which has occupied the mind of the great German philosopher, Hegel. Rāmānuja and Hegel agree at least on this point that our thinking about the nature of reality cannot transcend human experience and, so far as the latter is concerned, it must be admitted that the spirit or self-consciousness alone supplies us with the clue to the understanding of its character. It is in the light of this constructive insight that Hegel emphatically remarks that the whole point of philosophical thinking consists in taking Reality to be a substance or a subject. In his judgment, Spinoza was far from true philosophical and religious insight, because of the fact that he stopped short with a principle of explanation which was indeterminate and which, therefore, could not explain the

qualitative differences of our experience. In any conception of God or ultimate reality, we are obliged to incorporate the notion of value not merely because values are revealed in human experience that belongs to the finite order, but also because we cannot think they are foreign to and therefore superimposed on the nature and essence of the Supreme Mind. If the Supreme Mind or the Supreme Reality is of a nature that all our finite determinations become illusory or fictitious, idealism and materialism converge at the same point and extremes meet together. If this way of thinking is carried out to its drastic consequences, as exemplified in the history of philosophy East and West, the exiguous results of a point of view which makes nonsense of religious experience, are forced on us.

Taking it for granted, therefore, that the idea of the highest reality cannot be intelligible without its being conceived to be of the nature of self, and thinking that in forming its conception we start from the highest level of experience, we must say that *Brahman* or the Absolute is self-conscious life. Self-conscious life supplies us with the best clue by the aid of which we can understand the nature of *Brahman*. In the idealistic thought of Bradley, however, the idea of self has been subjected to severe logical scrutiny with the result that it has been declared to be a nest of self-contradictions. In the *Advaita Vedānta* of Śaṅkarācārya on the other hand, a similar method has been adopted, resulting in making *Brahman* an utterly abstract principle devoid of all spiritual contents and values. But, in spite of the dialectical difficulties Bradley faces in understanding the self as a self-consistent reality, he takes for granted the validity of this concept. He cannot get out of it. He writes: "Now as I have already remarked, my whole view may be taken as based on the self; nor again could I doubt that a self, or a system of selves, is the highest thing that we have".⁹⁴

94. F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 497, Oxford University Press, New York.

The very fact, therefore, that writers of this habit of thinking assume the validity of the notion of the self even in launching their attack on it proves once for all that spiritual unity or, for the matter of that, *Brahman* cannot be conceived by us as other than a self, and that consequently it cannot be allowed to be an ultimate principle if it is no better than a fixed principle of indifference from which nothing can come out. J. H. Muirhead remarks: "If this is so, and if the highest includes and epitomizes all that has gone before, it must be from what we find in self-consciousness, individual and social, that we obtain the completest idea of the elements for which room must be made in the attempt to discover what reality in its fullness means. The question may indeed be raised how self-consciousness can supply a criterion by which its own claim to ultimate reality is judged. But the question is unanswerable only if we begin by treating reality as falling outside of the self, as Bradley's polemic had the appearance of doing. If, on the other hand, as Bradley himself really held, reality is present and operative in self-conscious mind as something that is always carrying it beyond any of the finite forms it may assume, and if therefore the soul's reach may be said to be always farther than its grasp, what we have is not self-consciousness judging itself, but the greater than the self in the self of which we are conscious, judging that which is less than itself in its wholeness" 95

To sum up the points made in our effort to arrive at the conception of God. We may say in the first place that the demand for the existence of such a reality is the demand for a principle of unity. All knowledge, whether in science or in philosophy or religion or in commonsense, is ultimately a search for or a groping after unity. Even in commonsense knowledge, in our ordinary consciousness, in our daily business, we cannot proceed except on the supposition of unity present in external conditions and circumstances in the constant confrontation with which our

95. *Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy*, p. 423.

ordinary life is lived. Just because this unity on the two sides of our subjective experience and the world or Nature revealing itself to us is so patent, we seldom take care to reflect upon it. When something extraordinary happens, when the confrontations and adjustments of our expectations press on us, we begin to reflect upon the reasons accounting for our failure of adjustment. Hence the world in which we live cannot be completely nominalistic, where things are not related to one another and do not bear manifold relations to one another, which, in fact, form part of their existence. To the ordinary, unreflecting intelligence the world may present itself as a collection of things and beings. But unless it were an organic whole, unless it were in some form or other one, our adjustment to it, theoretical, emotional or practical, would have been completely impossible. The very fact that we live in this world is proof positive of our harmony with it. This unity, we have seen, is revealed in the whole theoretical, practical and emotional life of man, because unless the reality with which we are presented is not an expression of reason, mind and reason could never apprehend or grasp it.

In the second place, the circumstances under which we live compel us to believe in this unity between the mind and the universe outside. This is itself the expression of a deeper principle of unity beyond both the natural order and the human order. The physiological expressions in the human personality stand on the same footing as the physical activities in the world outside. The arrangements of things, phenomena and events in the world also are on the whole of a kind that assure us of the presence of mind beyond and beneath them. The world on the whole is a universe and not a multiverse. Science is a splendid exposition of the presence of reason behind the world. The principles and laws under which it arranges the phenomena, objects and events are claimed not only to reveal them, but also to be their explanations. They teach us the lesson that unless governed and guided by a Supreme Mind, the world presented to us would

not be the world that it is. Therefore, science is not necessarily atheistic. In itself it cannot mislead us into thinking of the world as godless. Thus, it is clear that even the enquiries and investigations in science do not seem hindrances to the religious interpretation of reality. If, however, we think, again, not of science, but of sciences, or engage in the interpretation of the qualitative differences in the different levels of reality they are called upon to explain and account for, the progressive revelation of qualitative distinctions cannot be set aside.

Reality cannot therefore be regarded as a fixed principle of indifference to which no meaning or value can be attached. The sciences themselves teach us that the visible world is not the world of mere quantitative relations. It is not a reasonable view, unless one elects to be dogmatic, that science can altogether dispense with the qualitative differences of the different forms of reality. In the present state of our knowledge science has reached a point where qualitative differences enter into the scheme of its explanation. It has to be admitted that the order of reality in which there is emergence of values at different levels is a hierarchical one which is not reversible. In a purely mechanistic world in which all things are of the same kind, the whole process should be reversible. But we cannot admit at the present time that the order of things, events and phenomena is reversible. This is itself an additional proof of the presence of purposive intelligence constantly at work in the universe.

In the third place, we have argued that the nature of a process is revealed not in the antecedents but rather in the antecedents and consequences taken together and that consequently what its character is, can be only known by fixing our eyes on what completes the process. That which comes in the temporal order at the end of a process, is in the eternal order already at the very beginning of it. "What to us appears as an order in time is only the 'moving image' of another order which is not in time. In modern language, the time order is

only the scheme through which to our eyes the real order which is one of values unfolds itself. To us it appears as though mind and its knowledge were an after-thought in the evolution of things. To that which is beyond time there is no before and after : what is last may be first and the first last".⁹⁶

There is difference between description and explanation. Description focuses attention upon only one part or aspect or feature of the whole and looks at it from a partial or fragmentary standpoint. But antecedents cannot be separated from consequences, because both of them form one whole. If, therefore, the whole process ends ultimately in the revelation or expression of mind taken to be its product, then we must say that mind is at the beginning of it, because the end is somehow or other present in the beginning, or else the process would not have stopped short precisely at this point. But the emergence of mind in the world completes the story about it and this entitles us to look upon the world as not a meaningless dance of atoms, but rather as a divine world which is directed to a progressive revelation of values. It can thus be said that in an adequate and comprehensive explanation of reality, there can be no divorce between facts and value, between judgements of fact and judgments of value, and that consequently in the interpretation of reality, not only theoretical intelligence but our aesthetic and religious needs as well as our ideals of duty and goodness must seek fulfilment.

Ultimate Reality or God is invariably taken in religious experience to be the very abode, the inexhaustible repertoire, nay, the very fulfilment of all values ; and it is because of this that He fulfils all the desires of the finite individual and gives him the sense of final satisfaction and fulfilment of his whole life. It is not until man realises God in himself that he can

⁹⁶. J. H. M. Muirhead, *Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy*, p. 432.

think he has been able to achieve the ultimate goal of his life. As St. Augustine so vividly and poignantly puts it: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are ever restless till they rest in Thee". God is involved in our whole experience and existence, and therefore, He must be the end of our being. But God cannot be the final goal and destiny of man, if He is a mere abyss of being, an indifferent principle, a mere existence with no characteristic feature whatsoever, nothing that man can know or aspire after, and if He has no individuality of His own. It is not such a God with which religious experience can have any concern. The thought of God is the thought of the Supreme Self-conscious Mind, of a mind that is concrete and individual. If He has a personality, He must have a self-contained centre of experience of His own. If He is personal, His personality can be qualitatively similar to ours. He must be a thinking, feeling and willing individual like us, although His is utterly different from our empirical personality. To be real is to be self-conscious and individual. A mind that is individual is not co-extensive with the minds of others, whether of God or of any other person. Experiences are impenetrable, though sharable. Communion is not fusion, nor union sublation. The true conception of God is the conception of a self-conscious individual mind which is not obliterative or subversive of the existence of other minds and other individuals. The existence of self-conscious individuals other than God is not a limitation of the supremacy of God as assumed by monism. Nor does it impair His freedom and omnipotence. The recognition of the reality of other individuals than God is rather an embellishment of the glory of God as pointed out by Vedāntadeśika.⁹⁷

God is not infinite in the physical, quantitative sense so that there is nothing beyond and different from Him that exists. God is not infinite in the sense of the totality of all things which philosophers designate by the name of the Absolute. If God is

97. See S. S. Raghavachar, *Vedāntasāgraha*, p. 112.

self-conscious—and self-conscious He must be if He has a centre of His own and is spiritual—He is infinite not in the sense that He is whatever there is (i.e., the world and the individual self), nor in the sense that the world or the individual is a part of Him, but in the sense that they depend on Him and only in and through Him have their meaning and significance. This is the suggestion of the *Upaniṣad* when it says that it is on Him that the world depends.⁹⁸ Hence to think of God as self-conscious is to think of Him as an individual.

It is not the bare assertion of the ultimate reality or *Brahman* behind the phenomena of the world that can have any meaning or significance for religious experience which is a direct confrontation with God Himself; and it is by communion with Him, not for nothing, but for the appropriation and realisation in human personality of that which it lacks and by means of which alone he can seek fulfilment in all the dimensions of his being, that man turns to God. Therefore, when exponents of Viśiṣṭādvaita proceed to combat the cogency of the doctrine of *Nirviṣeṣa Brahman* which, as the proponents of *Advaita Vedānta* are prone to claim, is without any determination whatsoever and of which we can say nothing more than that it merely exists or is the permanent background of the projection of the appearances of the world, it gives eloquent expression to the assured conviction of the human mind that in any attempt at a constructive account of the ultimate reality we are not entitled to start from a limited range of premises. When in our effort at a theoretical understanding of the nature of the ultimate reality and of the universe, our starting points are premises which concentrate on extremely restricted fragments of experience, we are compelled to arrive at such exiguous and meagre results as figure prominently in the philosophical vindications of such abstractions as are hypostatized both in natural science and in

98. *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, III.

such forms of idealism as are approximations to *Advaita Vedānta*. If *Brahman* is the ultimate value, if, as the *Upaniṣads* are not tired of telling us, It alone can be the source of final fulfilment to us, and if without knowing It we can never achieve perfection and beatitude, if it is only Its nature and essence that is fragmentarily expressed in all the pleasures and values of the world, then is not the attempt to represent It as a mere being a caricature of the *Upaniṣadic* view of ultimate reality or of *Brahman*?

The controversy centering on the plausibility of the doctrines of *Nirviṣeṣa* and *Saviṣeṣa Brahman*, the ultimate reality which is indeterminate and impersonal or determinate and personal, prompts the inquiry as to whether or not the element of value can be incorporated into any theoretical conception of the nature of ultimate reality. It is not so much a question of whether there is any permanent, immutable background behind the flux of events, but whether it is mere impersonal existence or whether it is like or unlike the human self and the human experience which are matters of our most intimate, direct concern and which alone can supply us with the vantage point from which we can look at and ponder over the ultimate nature and meaning of things. In point of fact, the time-honoured problem of the union of value and existence, of fact and its meaning, of the dichotomy of mere existence and existence as determined by values, cannot but exercise its impact on the crucial issue of the nature of *Brahman*. For Rāmānuja, *Brahman* must be the Supreme Person, *Puruṣottama*. The word '*Brahman*', in Rāmānuja's judgment, has no value and significance whatsoever as the principle of mere indifference. In the words of Radhakrishnan: "The *Nirguṇa Brahman*, which stares at us with frozen eyes regardless of our selfless devotion and silent suffering, is not the God of religious insight. Sāṃkara's method, according to Rāmānuja, leads him to a void, which he tries to conceal by a futile play of concepts. His *Nirguṇa Brahman* is a blank, suggesting to us the famous mare of Orlando, which had

every perfection except the one small defect of being dead. Such a *Brahman* cannot be known by any means—perception, inference, or scripture”.⁹⁹

Value therefore or, we might say, the attributes we assign to *Brahman* must be supposed to belong intrinsically to It as constituting Its nature and essence, instead of being treated as superimpositions on It. As even so sympathetic an exponent of *Advaita Vedanta* as the late Dr. Mahendra Nath Sircar remarks : “The dynamic aspect of experience has found little or no value in Sankara’s philosophy. Sankara has laid supreme stress upon the transcendent consciousness and has thrown away the immanent aspect of experience as philosophically unsubstantial, though it has a value for exoteric purposes. And it should be noticed that the humanistic tendencies and impulses of art, religion, beauty and social sympathy have been delegated to the plane of immanent consciousness. These impulses, however lofty and noble, may have a value in the divided vision of life, but have no place in the expansive, undivided, transcendent consciousness”.¹⁰⁰

But metaphysics, if at all it claims to propound a doctrine about the first principles of knowledge and existence, to put forward a view of the nature of the ultimate reality, then cannot cast aside such a valuable and helpful category of explanation as that of value. To ask, therefore, if *Brahman* is impersonal or personal, indeterminate or determinate, qualified or qualityless, is to ask whether values are real or whether they are mere subjective gloss on the nature of things. Windelband says : “We do not now so much expect from philosophy that which it was formerly supposed to give, a theoretic scheme of the world, a synthesis of the results of the separate sciences, or transcending

99. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 632-33

100. Mahendranath Sircar, *Comparative Studies in Vedantism*, p. 62.

them on lines of its own, a scheme harmoniously complete in itself. What we expect from philosophy today is reflection on those permanent values which have their foundation in a higher spiritual reality, above the changing interests of the times".¹⁰¹

Lotze says: "In its feeling for the value of things and their relations, our reason possesses as genuine a revelation as, in the principles of logical investigation, it has an indispensable instrument of experience".¹⁰²

There is no getting away, therefore, from the position which maintains the identity of value and reality and tells us that value which is centred in existence is more comprehensive and significant than existence abstracted from value. Religious experience is inconceivable without the knowledge and appreciation of absolute values. And if we cannot subscribe to the view that Ultimate Reality is a featureless or characterless something, indistinguishable from the unknown, unknowable noumenon of Kant, as it were, then values must be acknowledged to be included in the content of the nature and essence of God.

V. Value and Existence

Values in themselves can form no part in an impersonal scheme of things. The two errors of treating them as merely subjective, having no basis in reality, and of existence being regarded as completely impersonal, according to which all things stand on the same level, are always to be avoided in all spheres of knowledge and practice. Worship, as has been aptly remarked, is 'worth-ship', which is reverence for and surrender to the sanctity that values command. Man can bow in reverence, devotion and surrender not to an impersonal scheme of things, but to a reality in which they find their lodgement.

101. Quoted in W. R. Inge, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 175.

102. Quoted from *Ibid*, p. 175.

In abstraction, therefore, neither value nor existence makes sense. A value which has no existence is no value and an existence which is without any value is no existence. There is nothing which is that cannot be estimated by us as either lower or higher in the scale of values. We cannot understand existence without arranging the facts which exist in an order which is axiological.

But values find their lodgement only in the mind from which they cannot be abstracted. All values are conscious values; it is only in mind and for mind that they exist. By mind alone can they be appropriated, expressed or manifested. This conviction of the reality of value and the correlativity of existence and value is implicit in the order of space and time. The pedestrian assertion that things by their mere existence in the order of space and time are real does not carry any meaning. It is as impossible to think of mere existence in the order of time without its relation to the human mind, as it is impossible to think of a shadow without a substance. Existence in time is no mark of priority in being. We cannot, therefore, say that values can be explained materialistically as arising from the configuration of material particles. Our study of the problem of the eternal co-existence of fact and value has shown that, even in the feeble beginnings of anything, value in the form of the end to which it is directed and into which it develops, must be acknowledged to be already existing

But if mind as a spirit or self-consciousness is the origin and explanation of all things, values are acknowledged objects of our experience only as they are embodied in or expressed by the mind. We cannot say that mind creates them, but it is in the mind that they exist and it is by mind that they are appreciated, appropriated or practised. The relation between value and existence is such that, while on the one hand value cannot be explained in terms of existence, on the other hand existence can be supposed to be the expression of value or is deemed necessary

to make it something tangible and real. We must not think of a mere value or mere existence. But mind without value is also unthinkable, because mind in its higher experiences cannot express itself except by giving expression to value. It is a commonplace of philosophical thinking to hold that value is the result of limitation. It expresses itself in selection and choice which is a characteristic mental activity. Hence, all values are conscious values, and it is only in an idealistic and spiritualistic theory of reality that the meaning and significance of value can be rightly and adequately understood and appreciated.

But there are values which we seek not as subordinate to other interests, but as absolute ends intelligible by reference to themselves alone. These are ultimate values, and they have the power, as Hegel says, at least to exist. One of the forms in which value expresses itself we call truth. It is eternal and timeless, but although it possesses in this way a character which is independent of time, it is only as it expresses or reveals itself in knowledge that it becomes a feature or a character of mind and can enter into the world. That we can ever think of it in relation to our existence is interwoven with time and change. The same can be said with regard to the other absolute values of goodness and beauty. Only as manifesting itself in character and action can goodness be recognised to be real. Only so can it be a quality of existence and therefore qualify it. Beauty must be appreciated as existing in things presented to us in the form of sensations. A beautiful object, it is said, is twice born. It must have a lower before it can have the higher birth. Hence we can say that it is by reference to the mind that we can understand their nature and significance. "What we commend is not courage or temperance 'in the abstract', an 'universal' concept", says A. E. Taylor, "but the characteristic life of a courageous or temperate man. What we condemn is not cruelty or adultery 'in the abstract', but the characteristic acts and desires of cruel or adulterous men."¹⁰³

103. *The Faith of a Moralist*, Vol. I, p. 41.

But since values are objective, we cannot say that mind is a creator of values, even though it expresses them. The human mind may be receiving them from another world and expressing them in thought and conduct and not creating them out of nothing as it were. Man is not the creator of values, he can only express them in the finite order. In other words, values have to be acknowledged as having their final home or source only in the Absolute Mind or God. The following passage at the close of the last of the "Terminal Essays" of Bradley in his *Principles of Logic* gives eloquent expression to the idea: "Everything that is worth our having is (you may say) our own doing, and exists only so far as produced by ourselves. But you must add that, in the whole region of human value, there is nothing that has not come down to us from another world—nothing which fails still to owe its proper being and reality to that which lives and works beyond the level of mere time and existence."¹⁰⁴

The sum and substance of the much-maligned ontological argument in Western philosophy is that we cannot exclude from the conception of God the ideal necessities of human nature. Bradley himself has emphatically made the point that the possibilities of thought cannot exceed the actuality of existence; what may be, must be. "What may be, if it also must be, assuredly is"¹⁰⁵

If there is ultimately, in a very real sense, identity between thought and reality, and if it is always human thought and human experience which supply us with the criterion for the formulation of an adequate idea of God, then it is quite implausible to assert that our theoretical and practical difficulties regarding the nature of the Ultimate Reality can be solved by merely postulating the existence of an indeterminate Absolute at the root of

104 F. H. Bradley, *Principles of Logic*, Vol. II, p. 724.

105. *Appearance and Reality*, p. 199.

human experience and the world. We have recurred to the central point that howsoever impersonal or objective our approach to the problem of Ultimate Reality may be, we have to start from the nature of the world and from human experience. Reality certainly transcends human experience infinitely; and our knowledge of God, derived from our apprehension of the world, cannot fathom its mysteries, depths and dimensions. The Absolute does not exist in the breath of our nostrils. All the same, Reality must be at least what human experience judges it to be. Even the impersonalists cannot escape the charge of anthropomorphism. Goethe made the significant remark that man does not know how anthropomorphic he is. But the usual charge of anthropomorphism against such a mode of reasoning seems to be mistaken, as it arises from a misunderstanding of the spirit underlying the argument.

In framing such a conception of God as has been set forth above, we certainly do not bring God to the human level. God is God and man is man, and the distinction between them can by no means be wiped out. Yet since human knowledge for us is the ultimate term and starting point, self the highest reality and personality the highest possible expression of all our ideals, we cannot deprive God of human contents, nor think of Him as being impersonal and lower than self. Even Bradley, the staunch impersonalist, has more often than not laid stress on this criterion of human experience, telling us that the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty must be acknowledged to be the expressions of the Ultimate Reality and that only in such judgments of value can we expect any expression of our effort to get a true insight into what the Absolute must be.

The conception of an impersonal Absolute has doubtless been advanced by exclusively concentrating only upon the intellectual and theoretical necessities of human experience. This leaves out of account large areas of human experience which are more real than our intellectual exercises and conceptual

abstractions. Intellect is only an element in the organic structure of the human faculties of knowledge. Bradley has himself said: "We must believe that reality satisfies our whole being. Our main wants for truth and life, and for beauty and goodness, must all find satisfaction".

Again: "If metaphysics is to stand, it must, I think, take account of all sides of our being. I do not mean that every one of our desires must be met by a promise of particular satisfaction: for that would be absurd and utterly impossible. But if the main tendencies of our nature do not reach satisfaction in the Absolute, we cannot believe that we have attained to perfection and truth".¹⁰⁶

"Every truth, says Penington the Quaker, 'is shadow except the last'. But every truth is substance in its own place, though it be but a shadow in another place. And the shadow is a true shadow, as the substance is a true substance".¹⁰⁷

Such a mode of reasoning supplies us with the ultimate major premise, the final starting point from which we can start thinking about the nature of that reality in whose breath and atmosphere we all live, move and have our being. We cannot say that when we think of God in this way all mystery about Him has been unveiled. The mystery will continue to remain, and yet we cannot say that what we know of Him is sheer illusion and not the expression of His real nature. Otherwise, God must be deemed indifferent to the human ideals of thought and conduct. God is unknowable, we may say, not because we cannot apprehend Him but because He is inexhaustible. Human knowledge in its highest stretches is a symbol, and yet it is a symbol of the real and not of a chimera.

106. *Appearance and Reality*, p. 146.

107. W R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 215.

VI. *The Problem of Personality*

Lest we should run the risk of thinking of that which is the highest in reality and value and is the source and explanation of all things, in terms of the lowest categories of existence, there is no alternative to thinking of it as what is the highest in human existence. Even such absolutists as think that religion is not quite free from theoretical difficulties, do not shrink from reminding us that what is ultimate must satisfy all sides of our being.

"There is nothing more real," says Bradley, "than what comes in religion. To compare facts such as these with what comes to us in outward existence would be to trifle with the subject. The man who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness knows not what he seeks."¹⁰⁸

Hence Bradley categorically affirms that if there is any risk of downgrading the ultimate reality to the lowest existence, it must not be considered personal if the term 'personal' stands for the limitations of the finite individual, but rather super-personal, which means in his opinion that the Absolute contains in itself all such perfections in an infinite measure as are only imperfectly manifested in the human individual. The term 'superpersonal' or 'supra-personal' is not contradictory to the term 'personal', but points to the highest imaginable perfections of such values as are characteristically human. Or we may say that 'superpersonal' conveys only a more intense and exalted meaning of what is implicit in 'personal'.

It has been well pointed out: "One way, of course, of asserting this uncomprehended unity is to speak of God as 'supra-personal', and many would so speak. Now it is fair and

108. *Appearance and Reality*, p. 449.

important to insist that, if we use this expression, we should not allow it to degenerate into just a polite equivalent of 'impersonal'. It is philosophers rather than theologians who need this warning. But a corresponding warning must be addressed to the theologian. Those who speak of God as 'supra-personal' must not allow themselves to understand by that expression merely 'personal plus.....' The 'supra' in 'supra-personal' does not indicate simply a 'more': it indicates a 'more' such that the 'more' transforms the meaning of the term 'personal' itself. Consider a parallel and related case. The word 'eternal' is abused (intending as it does a supra-temporal mode of being), if it is taken as only the negation of the temporal or, again, as referring to a complex of two factors externally and unintelligibly related, namely, endless time, as we conceive of time, and the timeless. In just the same way, the term 'supra-personal' would be abused, whether it were taken simply to negate the meaning of 'personal' or to supplement it in a merely additive way." 109

God is the final presupposition of all things. Hence He cannot be like the things and beings of our ordinary experience. Even those who believe in the conception of personal God are emphatic in holding that God's nature cannot be apprehended by finite human intelligence and that human speech, thought and language can furnish us with only a faint, feeble, very inadequate and incomplete description of Him. In fact, the mystery of existence cannot be fathomed. When according to the scientists the mystery of even physical existence like an atom cannot be completely unmasked, what warrant is there for thinking that personal existence can unfold all its secrets to us? It is, as a matter of fact, the mysterious character of private life that confers on it its distinct status and distinguishes it from all other existence. Those who assert, therefore, the existence

109. W. G. MacLagan, *The Theological Frontier of Ethics*, p. 180.

of personal God never indeed think that human intelligence is adequate to the Divine existence. God certainly possesses an existence which is understandable and intelligible to Him alone. All personal existence possesses this character.

In other words, there is room in theism for what we call healthy agnosticism. The fact that God Himself must possess an existence which is intelligible to Him alone, precludes the possibility of His being made an object in such a way that human intelligence does not allow any the least mystery to cling to His conception. God enjoys an existence which is exclusively His own and which none else can know. But incomprehensibility of God by the finite intelligence does not stand in the way of the affirmation of His existence. God is there as His existence is a matter of felt, indubitable experience for us. If, therefore, God is not completely beyond our grasp, if He does not altogether elude our finite intelligence and if again, as can rightly be argued, He must be atleast what we are, then there can be absolutely no positive basis for the view that we cannot attribute a character to Him that is intelligible in terms of human predicates and human values.

The traditional *Advaita Vedānta* doctrine of *nirviśeṣa*, indeterminate, impersonal *Brahman* or God, in some of its very uncompromising contentions, is the Indian analogue of the Western Spinozistic doctrine of infinite substance which, as Spinoza has again and again reminded us, just because it is the presupposition of all things and all determinations are within it, cannot itself be determined. The logic which drags both Spinoza and Saṅkara to an almost similar point of view is more or less identical. It is indeed a positive contribution of such thinking to all constructive philosophy to exhibit the Absolute or God as the presupposition of all things, but it makes the mistake of holding that just because of its determinations and imperfections and limitations, finite existence is not what God is, and that hence it must be completely wiped out if at all we have to affirm His existence.

This logic in both these systems of thought has lent support to the doctrine that God as the Supreme Being can be conceived by us only as the utter negation of finite existence which we have every reason to believe is imperfect, negative and unreal. This is obviously the conception of a negative or spurious Infinite God or Absolute. Such a God must be our final refuge and shelter, not because of what the finite existence is not. It is only world-weariness or an acute pessimistic attitude to life that makes us take refuge in such a conception of ultimate reality.

But if the relation of the finite and the infinite and the progress of thought from the one to the other and *vice versa* can alone furnish us with the solution to tide over all the difficulties in our conception of God, then God cannot be indeterminate and impersonal, but one of whom finite existences can be real determinations. All finite objects can be treated as His expressions and revelations. In that case, we cannot defend the doctrine of an indeterminate, indefinite impersonal Absolute. The negative procedure of reaching the infinite by eliminating from it the imperfections of the finite order has to be supplemented by a positive one in which the finite is viewed as the revelation of the infinite. In the standpoint of atheistic monism, there is no possible conception of the infinite except that which reaches it by progressively denying the finite.

There is some justification for this method of reasoning, because the infinite is free from the limitations of the finite and we cannot think of it except by stripping it of all the imperfections and limitations of the latter. But while it eliminates from the idea of God all the limitations of finite things and beings, it runs the risk of reducing God to a principle of abstract identity. This abstract method of reasoning on which religious thinkers of the mentality of Spinoza and Sankarācārya enlarge, has to be supplemented by a positive point of view for which the negative method can be only a preparation.

Rāmānuja's religious philosophy, therefore, is a great landmark in the history of Indian religious thought, because it supplements the completely negative and abstract method of reasoning in the *Advaita Vedānta* of Śaṅkarācārya with a concrete, positive one in which the Infinite, God or Absolute cannot but be thought of as determined in terms of what is characteristic of the finite order of things and beings. This does not amount, however, to exhibiting the infinite as no other than the finite. Rather it results in trying to show that if there is a progress from the finite to the infinite, there can equally be a regress from the infinite to the finite. These implications, necessarily involved in the conception of the finite and the infinite, have not been worked out in the *Advaita Vedānta* of Śaṅkarācārya. It has been done by Viśiṣṭadvaita, and for this reason it can be said that what Rāmānuja has said with respect to an adequate conception of the Deity, fills in the vacuum left over by the *Advaita* of Śaṅkarācārya. There is no point in reiterating the truth that the Infinite is the presupposition of the finite, if the finite is not viewed in the light of the Infinite and treated as its expression. Of course, it would be utterly erroneous to hold that Śaṅkara himself had not the least idea of this positive procedure of casting the light of the infinite on the finite or of reconciling both in a way that is not detrimental to the reality of either of the terms of the relation, which cannot be thought about except in their mutual distinction and links to each other. In his writings here and there, Śaṅkara emphatically announces the final end and consummation of philosophic wisdom which he frankly admits is the cultivation of that highest point of view which enables us to look at the finite order in the light of the infinite.

He declares that the consummation of perfect wisdom is the conversion into the divine view of things. The knower of *Brahman* rises to that knowledge of *Brahman* which engenders in him a perspective which catches the glimpse of the Deity in all

things. This presupposes the recognition of the reality of the finite order which, unless it is real, cannot be viewed in new light or perspective.

नस्वाः ब्रह्मविद्यायाः सर्वभाषापत्तिः कलम् 110

But such suggestions are few, and so little stress has been laid on them that Sāṅkara's negative theology virtually eclipses the positive one. It was only to counterbalance such exercises in the abstract mode of reasoning by a positive and affirmative attitude towards the relations of the infinite and the finite that Viśiṣṭādvaita was a glorious and timely response.

Rāmaṇuja rightly deserves the credit for reminding us that just because the Absolute or God is the presupposition of the finite, we cannot assign a completely negative meaning to Him, so that He can be supposed to exclude the finite, but that He has to be conceived as including all things and beings which can be His determinations and attributes. All things in that case would cease to be mere phantoms or fabrications of the delusive *māyā* or nescience, but would rather be treated as expressions and revelations of God. This is what we mean by the conception of the Absolute or God as the self-determining principle behind Nature and man. This is what we mean by saying that God is not indeterminate, abstract and impersonal, a principle of fixed indifference or abstract intelligence, but is rather personal and determinate, and that faint glimpses of Him are encountered in His revelation in both history and Nature.

Hence if any alternative to a naturalistic or a materialistic treatment of the explanation of human experience and of the universe as a whole is possible, it may be said that it is

110. Sāṅkara's commentary on *Bṛih. Up.* I. 4. 10.

unquestionably a religious or theistic one, in which God is personal and is the eternal fountainhead or abode of all the ideals and values of human life that are only imperfectly manifested in it. Rāmaṇuja has given a conceptual formulation of precisely this conception of the Deity when he says that the supreme reality is the Supreme Personal God who is the ultimate cause and foundation of all finite existence, who is hostile to all imperfections, who is the eternal repertoire and the source of all auspicious qualities, attributes or values, and who is therefore different from both the finite self and the world.

This conception of God as personal, and the ultimate reality as a self-determining principle, is one of the greatest landmarks in the history of Indian religious thought. Rāmaṇuja was the leader of that powerful crusade against the *Advaita* standpoint in philosophy that stimulated the thinking of all other *Vedāntic* teachers who strenuously engaged themselves in the uphill task of disproving the logical tenability of the doctrine of the impersonal Absolute advanced in the interpretation of the religious texts and challenging Śaṅkara's contentions. These teachers have succeeded in removing the cloud of confusion centering on the Hindu conception of the Deity by trying to convince the critics of Indian thought and culture that Hindu scriptures do not advocate pessimism and pantheism, but rather world-affirmation, optimism and theism. We shall presently try to demonstrate the theistic point of view in the original *Vedāntic* literature in the light of Rāmaṇuja's interpretation. But, for the present, it seems necessary to consider at some length whether the inconsistencies and contradictions attached to the doctrine of God as possessing attributes, do, as a matter of fact, affect the rigours of philosophical thinking, or whether they are only the outcome of the application of a mode of reasoning quite irrelevant to the context in which we think of God as a fact or a reality and not as an abstract concept.

VII. The Principle of 'Sāmānādhikarānya': The Logic of Predication

It is needless here to explain the *Advaita* principle of coordinate predication or *Sāmānādhikarānya*, which is persistently and invariably interpreted to point to *Brahman* as an abstract identity to whom no predicates or attributes can be assigned. To say that *Brahman* is at the root of the world or of all appearances does not improve the case, for the question here is whether whatever else is there in addition to *Brahman* is a mere false projection of It or has real existence. There is no point in calling *Brahman* the foundation of all things, if the latter have no reality or existence. *Brahman* is infinite in the sense that He is the basis, the *adhiṣṭhāna* of the false appearance of all things. Everything other than *Brahman* is false.

Saṅkara frequently invokes the analogy of the mother of pearl and silver or of the snake-rope to illustrate his point. This uniform and persistent mode of reasoning conditions and determines the whole procedure of his thinking, and under the influence of the formal laws of identity, contradiction and excluded middle, he cannot come to terms with any position which justifies the doctrine of the Absolute as a principle of concrete identity. Spinoza is in this respect the fittest parallel to *Advaita*. Saṅkara, or for the matter of that, the proponents of *Advaita* follow this beaten track and are insensible of the dangers consequent upon this mode of reasoning. They are reluctant to acknowledge that this habit of thinking vitiates the whole metaphysical doctrine of the Absolute, reducing it to a mere undifferentiated unity which has no character, no determination whatsoever. Even Saṅkara has the awareness that this *Brahman* may appear to the dull-witted to be no better than a mere void. He was over-confident of his reasoning, but when we examine the implications of the thesis of the undifferentiated, homogeneous consciousness which is *Brahman*, we find that such a principle cannot be real.

This mode of reasoning and thinking which forms the basis of Sāṅkara's absolute monism, *Kevalādvaita*, is not quite unfamiliar to students of the history of thought, Indian and Western. It was adopted as far back as the fifth century B. C. by the Sophists and Nominalists of Greece who advocated the impossibility of any objective knowledge. Spinoza and Bradley put forward the same scepticism on the basis of the same reasoning. It may be helpful, therefore, to explain Sāṅkara's reluctance to assign any attribute to God, impregnated as his thinking is with this mode of reasoning. He starts with the truth of abstract identity, and his adherence to it is so unqualified that he cannot even allow the attribution of any perfection or attribute to *Brahman*, for he feels that this would amount to bringing in elements of plurality and diversity in *Brahman* which is undifferentiated, homogeneous and one. The principles of logic which underlie this habit of thinking are those of identity, contradiction and excluded middle. The law of identity says that there is nothing which is not absolutely identical with its own nature and existence. The law of contradiction teaches that nothing can possess contradictory features, while the meaning of the law of excluded middle is that not all such attributes as are contradictory or contrary to one another can be assigned to a thing, but only one of them. Under the influence of these laws of logic, Sophists argue that knowledge is possible because all knowledge consists of statement and all statements involve predication. Thus, in their opinion, we cannot predicate anything of anything, because if we predicate something of a subject, we assign to it something that it is not, and if we predicate of it something else that is not different from it, we in point of fact say nothing at all. In the first case, a proposition or a statement is impossible, because what is predicated of the subject does not belong to it and is different from it. In the latter case, just because we ascribe to the subject something which belongs to its nature or is identical with it, we virtually say nothing. The proposition is tautologous. Hence no statement is possible and this means that no knowledge is possible.

Bradley and Spinoza have developed the same method of argument. To give a concrete example, if we say 'John is intelligent', we say something which John is not. The subject, 'John', and the predicate, 'intelligent', are not the same. They are different ideas. 'John' is one idea and 'intelligent' is another idea. John is John and 'intelligent' is 'intelligent'; the one cannot be the other. It cannot be said that the subject and the predicate are one and the same. Therefore, the only kind of statement that we can make is that John is John, that is to say, $A=A$. But even this statement means nothing, because the predicate tells us nothing about the subject.

It is exactly this impossibility of predication, of thinking substantives and adjectives as correlative and consequently of regarding substances and qualities as independent of each other, that is explicitly maintained and strongly advocated in what is called the principle of *Sāmānādhikaranyā*, according to the *Advaita* interpretation. If *Brahman* is eternal and partless, Śaṅkara asserts, no attribute can be ascribed to It. He feels not the slightest compunction in declaring quite heroically and unreservedly that there is no possibility of the ascription of any character, quality or *dharma* to anything which is partless, because there is no evidence for the same.

न निर्वच्यवस्थानेकधर्मावस्थे दृष्टान्तोऽस्ति . 111

If therefore the existence of *Brahman* is conceived in such a way and the impossibility of attributing any character to it is so emphatically denied, then what else can *Brahman* be conceived to be than a principle of abstract identity? *Brahman* becomes identical with Itself. Its identity is so absolute that it does not require for the conception of it the existence of any plurality or difference, whereas in our experience we are conscious of unity

111. Śaṅkara's commentary on *Bṛh. Up.* VI. 2. 24-30.

only in and through multiplicity, and of difference and diversity through unity.

The laws of thought, of identity, contradiction and the excluded middle referred to above, tend to support such a view. When we try to make our ideas clear in the light of this principle, what seems to be plain is that their meanings cannot be construed except in conformity to abstract identity. Their meaning must be one and the same. They cannot have two opposite meanings at one and the same time. There is certainly a context or universe of discourse in which their applicability remains unquestioned. Thus, these laws of thought are quite valid so far as their application to the world of meanings, concepts or ideas is concerned. The meaning of a word is identical with itself. When, for example, we say, "The wall is white," "The grass is green", "The table is brown", or "John is good", the necessity of thought is such that we cannot, while making these utterances, also affirm at the same time: "The wall is black", "The grass is blue", "The table is yellow" or "John is bad". According to the law of identity, if we predicate white of the wall, we cannot also predicate not-white of it. According to both the laws of identity and the law of contradiction, if the wall is such or its nature is such that it has white colour, it cannot at the same time be also black. The same can be said of eternal truths also. The definition of a man, of a triangle, of a circle, a point, or a line and so on must be eternal and timeless. They must be identical with themselves.

But the question is whether predication is concerned with concepts, ideas or meanings, or whether its application can be extended to the world of facts, of reality or of metaphysics as well. If metaphysics is concerned with the world of facts, and if it is with reality that metaphysics deals, then evidently we cannot say that these laws of thought can apply to reality. Reality or fact as it is presented in our experience, is always

qualified. It is invariably, unexceptionally, not only a 'that', but also a 'what'. This is what even staunch monists like Bradley maintain in their theories of judgment. All existence has a content. Thus, there is no hindrance to our thinking that a fact which is something also possesses certain characteristic features. A thing is always qualified. It is not simply *A*, but is also *b*, *c*, *d* and so on. Socrates is not only a moral philosopher, but a citizen of a certain State, the husband of his wife, the teacher of Plato and so on. By Socrates we mean an individual who is not an instance of abstract identity, but an identity incorporating many characteristic features harmoniously synthesised or combined in him. The unity which symbolizes Socrates, includes and transcends his predicates or characteristic features.

Unity is supreme, though diversity is not altogether unmeaning. The supremacy of unity does not make diversity false. The existence of differences does not in any the least degree affect or suppress the unity and integrity of the fact or the individual called Socrates. The same can be said about *Brahman*. Predication concerns the question of the characterisation of fact or reality.

It is thus plain that Socrates or, for the matter of that, any fact is not what is absolutely identical with itself. In propositions like those mentioned above, we never mean that the subject is identical with the predicate. Socrates is not identical with the concept of moral philosophy or of the citizen and so on. The name 'Socrates' stands for a fact which, being qualified by the name 'Socrates', is further qualified as being a citizen, a husband and so forth. There is, therefore, no room for any confusion as regards the validity of predication. Predication is concerned with reality or facts, with individuals. It is not concerned with meaning, definition or concepts. The laws of identity, contradiction and excluded middle certainly have relevance to the world of meanings, concepts, ideas or definitions.

Hence once we take it for granted that predication concerns facts, we cannot think of any fact, or, for the matter of that, even the Supreme Fact, the First Cause and the Final Cause of all the source of all reality and existence that is *Brahman*, without also thinking of certain features or characteristics belonging intrinsically and essentially to it. However much we may indulge in a futile play of abstractions of hair-splitting logic, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the fact of all facts, the Supreme Fact, the Ultimate Reality or the Reality which is the source of all reality and existence, is not such that to It no attribute or characteristic feature can be ascribed.

This is the paradox in which the logic of abstract identity is involved. Even when the *Advaitins* tell us, for example, that although the *Upaniṣads* appear on the surface to ascribe truth, intelligence and infinitude to *Brahman*, such predicates aim only at distinguishing *Brahman* from the opposite features of finite objects from which *Brahman* is absolutely free, do they not really assign, though only negatively, a definite character to *Brahman*? Therefore, the contention of absolute monists that predication has no validity and that *Brahman* is absolutely devoid of any attribute is completely untenable.

VIII.. *The Concept of Relation*

The problem of the personality of the Absolute or *Brahman* is not the problem whether *Brahman* is really ultimate or supremely real, or of looking upon Him as merely a superhuman power, a little higher in the scale of being than man. But it is one of how best we can conceive of Him. The self is the highest reality we know, and human experience is the ultimate major premise with which alone can start all our thinking. Starting from any other point results in making *Brahman* sub-human by thinking of it in such a manner that the highest becomes hardly distinguishable from the lowest. It is the question of a perfect or an imperfect *Brahman*. It is the question of the meaning which the highest reality, the ultimate fact, can have for us.

There can be no compromise on this issue. Metaphysics or theology cannot fly in thin air. It is an interpretation of experience and, therefore, reality cannot be absolutely unlike what we know and experience. If it is from experience that we ascend to the height of the Supreme Reality, that Reality also, in virtue of the fact that It is supreme, must explain all facts by reference to which alone It is supreme. In that case, it cannot be an abstract principle. It is, in other words, the question whether *Brahman* is a self or not. What meaning can be attached to *Brahman* being called a self? Again, if it is a self even though it does not possess those features or attributes which form the content of the self, what does it mean? Ramanuja's attack on the doctrine of a *nirviṣeṣa* (indeterminate) and *nirguṇa* (qualityless) Supreme Reality is not an exhibition of the shallow dialectical powers of a medieval, scholastic theologian. It is such as to make it obligatory on us, as rational beings, to examine for ourselves whether the experience of deeply and directly felt facts of our spiritual and religious experience can have any bearing on the conception of the Reality that we can claim to be supreme and ultimate.

Intimately allied to the plausibility or implausibility of the doctrine of abstract identity is also the problem of the reality of relation to a substance. Viśiṣṭādvaita does not treat abstract identity to be real identity; nor does it maintain that there is any such thing as absolute oneness. It is realistic in its orientation and holds to an identity which is always qualified, oneness which is not without difference, identity which is not without multiplicity. Its doctrine of *viśiṣṭa aikya* is fundamental to all its thinking and reasoning in all matters of metaphysics and theology. In accordance with this fundamental metaphysical outlook, it considers its doctrine of *aprithak-siddhi* as crucial to all its reasonings about the relation between the finite and the infinite, identity and diversity, subject and object, substantive and adjective, man and God, man and the world, and God and the world. According to the logic of Viśiṣṭādvaita,

experience is a continuum in which all things are found together and subsequent analysis is no more than an aid to understand the mutual relationships that bind them together.

The co-existence of all things is not incompatible with their difference and their opposition. They all form part of the complementary aspects of one and the same reality. Unity is, no doubt, the sovereign principle, but difference is not altogether a completely fictitious notion, since it is true that it qualifies identity. The absoluteness of difference has been moderated by Viśiṣṭādvaita by holding the position that all things are *prakāras* or adjectives of *Brahman* or stand to Him in the same relation as that of the body to the soul. It follows, therefore, that God in Viśiṣṭādvaita is not attributeless.

However, it is crucially important to take account, in this connection, of certain dialectical difficulties contrived by *Advaita* metaphysics regarding the intelligibility of the notion of quality or attribute and of difference. These two notions of quality or attribute and of difference have an important bearing on the problem of the doctrine of a *nirviśeṣa* or a *saguna Brahman*. Reality can never be something undetermined, that is to say, without any determination. The question, nevertheless, that has been raised by *Advaitins* is whether the notion of *nirviśeṣa Brahman*, empirically *saguna*, is logically a legitimate one. One is here reminded of similar dialectical difficulties fabricated by Francis Herbert Bradley, whose monism, with certain qualifications, is similar to that of *Advaita*. *Advaitins* start with an irreconcilable dualism between substance and attribute.

Advaita is the doctrine of absolute monism. All plurality or difference is false. There is no question, therefore, of any relation binding or relating *Brahman* to anything else. The issue, therefore, of *Brahman* possessing attributes and of Its being related to other things is practically the same problem, because if *Brahman* is absolutely one, its oneness can neither be qualified

by the reality of anything other than It, nor by the attributes that can be assigned to It. It is interesting to note here that both Buddhism and *Advaita Vedānta* propound mutually opposite doctrines, one believing in discrete particulars and absolute nominalism, and the other holding to absolute monism, with the consequence that for both the concept of relation is irrelevant and unnecessary. In the former it is because things are not related at all; in the latter, because while *Brahman* alone is the truth, everything else is utterly false and there is consequently no question how the real is related to the false. Buddhism rejects the concept of relation, because reality consists of absolute particulars, *sva-lakṣaṇas*, all discrete, momentary and unrelated to one another. Extremes here combine to yield the same result.

Advaitins point out that since the concept of difference is unintelligible, and since in the notion of a substance qualified by attributes it is inextricably involved, we fail to understand how attributes can inhere in or determine or qualify a substance. But it is clear that such a conclusion stems from the mistaken procedure of viewing substance and attribute in abstraction or isolation from each other.

For *Advaita* they are so utterly different from each other that there is no possibility of thinking how the attributes can belong to the substance. If both the substance and the attribute are quite different from each other, there is no possibility of their being related. Suppose, for example, that a substance *A* possesses the attribute *B*. Now, taking for granted the truth of the *Advaita* contention that *A* and *B* are quite different, how can we think of their being related? If *A* and *B* are quite different, they cannot be related without a third term. In this case, a certain relation, say '*r*', may be called in from outside to relate *A* to *B*. Now, this '*r*' which joins *A* to *B* is not intrinsic either to *A* or to *B* and therefore must itself fall in need of another relation, say, '*r*¹'. In other words, if '*r*' be different from

both *A* and *B*, it cannot relate *A* to *B* without first being related to *A* on the one hand by '*r*₁' and to *B* on the other hand by '*r*₂'.

The same reasoning holds good again of the relation of *r*₁ to *A* and of *r*₂ to *B*, leading in this way to infinite regress. If thus *A* and *B* here represent respectively the substance and the attribute, then on the basis of this dialectical difficulty, there is no way of thinking how they can be related or how a substance can possess attributes. This is the reasoning which has been sponsored by *Advaita* for showing that difference is an utterly unintelligible notion.

Rāmānuja takes up this difficulty which is doubtless a self-made one. Once we start with the assumption of discrete particulars and take it for granted that experience and, for the matter of that, the reality which is experienced, are not each one of them a continuum, difficulties are bound to confront us. But before we proceed to establish the truth of the view on the basis of Viśiṣṭādvaita that experience is a continuum, it seems worth while to call attention to the very question of the legitimacy of the notion of relation. It may be asked whether relation stands on the same footing as the different terms it relates. Is relation also a term? Is it, therefore, different from the terms it relates? If relation forms the very nature of the things it relates, the question of its being a term other than the terms it relates does not arise at all. In that case, the question how relation joins two terms is quite illegitimate.

This problem has been considered by many Western philosophers as well, and it might be helpful to interpret the Viśiṣṭādvaita point of view in the light of the arguments advanced by them. This might even prove to be vitally interesting, because in the light of such interpretations one can understand how modern Rāmānuja's defence of the concept of relation can actually be found to be. Rāmānuja's defence of the concept of relation is rendered still more intelligible by the Western defence of the concept of relation. The great British

idealist, A. C. Ewing, and the late Professor John Cook Wilson have put forward the following arguments in support of the legitimacy of the concept of relation.

A. C. Ewing says that the question as to how a relation relates two terms is quite illegitimate, because it relates two terms without falling in need of anything else. To say that two things cannot be related by a relation because the relation is different from them, is like saying that two things cannot be tied by a string because the string is different from the things it joins together. But we know that unless a string is broken, it does not require another string to tie the two things.

To put it in his own words: "One might similarly argue that it was impossible to tie two things together with string because you would need another piece of string to tie the string to each object and so on for ever. The argument would be valid, if each piece of string used were so defective that it broke in the middle. Similarly, Bradley's objection would be valid of relations, if and only if they did not fulfil their function of relating. Only then would they need another relation to do the relating for them. But in that case they would not be relations. If, in $A r B$, r is really a relation, it relates A and B itself and does not require new relations to connect it to either, for the relational characteristic of standing in the relation is not itself a relation. To say that because A is related to B by r , A must stand in the relation r to B , and therefore must be characterised by (i.e., stand in the relation of 'having as characteristic' to) the relational characteristic of standing in the relation r to B , and be characterised further by having the characteristic of being characterised by the relational characteristic of standing in the relation r to B , is only to say the same thing over again in different words, so that the so-called different relations which are supposed to constitute the infinite regress are really only more and more cumbrous ways of expressing the same relation".¹¹²

¹¹² A. C. Ewing, *Idealism: A Critical Survey*, p. 147, Methuen & Co., London, 1914.

Prof. John Cook Wilson objects to the whole assumption of looking upon relation as different from the terms it relates:

"The presupposition of this fallacy is that if two somethings are different from one another, they must stand to one another in a relation which is different from either, not identical with, nor included in the separate nature of either. In other words, r is not identical with A or B , nor a part of what is already understood in A or B . So far from being always true, this presupposition can be shown to be never true, where A and B are in fact properly described as related.

"Take first the case in which A and B , being different from each other, there really is a relation r between them different from either. For instance, let r be equality in ' A equals B '. We have to ask whether there is indeed a relation between A and r and what it is; for the fallacy clearly lies in the first step, and it is presumed by the writer that we do not go beyond the original A and B and r by any new process of apprehension.

"Now, if there really be such a thing as r^1 , it is necessary that it should be new and that the statement ' A stands in the relation r^1 to r ' should be new and not a part of the original statement which gave r as the relation between A and B . The question, then, what r^1 is or what is the relation of A to r must be real and intelligible. We shall find that there is, in fact, no new statement and that the question is an unreal one, because the idea of a relation cannot be applied, as is proposed, to a relation and a term of that relation itself".¹¹³

Advaita Vedānta has raised this question of the intelligibility of the concept of relation with the sole intention of proving that there is neither any warrant for reality being qualified, nor for

113. John Cook Wilson, *Statement and Inference*, Vol. II, p. 693, Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969.

such identity or oneness as is compatible with plurality and difference. Reality is absolute oneness, abstract identity; and is for the same reason utterly without any determination or attribute. But Viśiṣṭādvaita challenges this view, arguing that the basis of the *Advaita* dialectic is the false assumption that all things given in our experience are completely discrete and unrelated to one another. British empiricists like Locke and Hume similarly started with the false assumption of simple ideas or particulars, momentary sensations or impressions. This difficulty, therefore, must rear its head, whenever one starts with the false assumption of atomic particulars in our experience being taken to be unrelated to one another.

The whole difficulty, however, disappears as soon as we take it for granted that reality is a continuum in which all things exist in virtue of their relation to one another. But these distinctions are there in the whole. This is what is suggested by the relation of *apṛthaksiddhi*. It has a definite bearing on the false, atomic, pluralistic view of things. There is hardly any doubt that *Advaita* inherits the atomistic psychology of Buddhism and makes it part of its own epistemology. This is the reason why it thinks that there is no such thing as a substance with qualities. Infected with the same dualistic tendency, it fails to understand how substances and qualities, while being quite different from each other, are nevertheless related together and how therefore both of them can connote one definite idea, because they constitute, in point of fact, one entity.

IX. Ultimate Reality as Concrete Identity

Experience is a continuum in which all that we know, all that subsequent analysis divides, are related to one another and exist because of the manifold relations they bear to one another. Their co-existence in the continuum is the basic fact of their reality or existence; their division and analysis into separate elements is only a methodological device to understand their nature. The fact that even analysis of the elements which the

scientists adopt is not absolute, but is supplemented by synthesis, that is to say, by concentrating upon so many other unknown relations with which the object under investigation may be very intimately connected, proves that it is in the whole alone that a thing has its existence and place. The division of a thing into its elements, therefore, which is only methodological in character, must not be taken to be the fundamental fact of its existence. To divide a thing into its component elements need not lead to the inference that the reality of a thing is nothing more than that of its separate elements. The understanding of a thing is not the same as its reality or existence.

The tendency of taking analysis alone to be the decisive method for the determination of the nature of a thing has been in vogue since the advent of the naturalistic method of understanding Nature, from the seventeenth century onwards. The naturalistic method of analysis started with the division of a thing into substance and quality, of qualities again into the primary and the secondary, in a manner so that in modern philosophy profundity is estimated by the proportion in which a philosopher sees that he knows nothing except qualities. Moore and Russell, for instance, would say that they do not perceive a table but rather the sense data only. Russell has even gone to the length of saying that a thing is no more than a collection or an aggregate of certain mathematical equations. But, whatever value and importance these so-called philosophical profundities and subtleties may have in the world of abstractions, they cannot be taken to be the data with which we can start for understanding the nature of a thing. The nature of a thing is not really understood, if it is cast aside by the analytic method, making us unable to see the wood for the trees. Philosophers differ from common people in not being able to see anything where the latter can see all things. Berkeley has pertinently remarked that philosophers very often create their own preconception "for being ignorant of what everybody else knows perfectly well".

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita epistemology, the process of our knowledge does not start with discrete sensations or impressions or atomic, simple ideas. They are not the data with which one can start one's thinking about the constitution of reality or about the process of knowledge itself. The object, a substance with its qualities, is given in knowledge as an object. It is already there, and before we can analyse an object of an act of knowledge, there must be a thing to analyse. This object or substance has its place in experience as a continuum, an indefinite whole in which subsequent analysis discovers definite distinctions like similarity and other relations. But these similarities are not the data with which we start. It is the object or the substance with qualities which is given in our immediate consciousness. It is revealed as a whole without our awareness of its distinction into its component elements. However obscure, vague or indefinite our perception of the object of a thing given in our immediate consciousness may be, it is always something with certain characteristic features.

On this point, L. A. Reid observes: "The object of awareness is given in a *Gestalt*, within which and related to which are given the parts of the complex. The *Gestalt* need not be a clearly defined pattern. It may have no edges, as, for instance, when I look at a picture on the wall in a three-dimensional space which shades off continuously and indefinitely into the background. But the complex of which we are aware is always a *field* within which the parts exist. The parts may be subsequently discriminated by name, but the field is not something which is formed out of their addition; the parts are discriminated within the whole.....From the other side, that of the subject, all and any knowledge contains an *intuitive* element, meaning by this not some 'occult' faculty or anything infallible, or anything confined to the apprehension of one kind of truth (e.g., logically self-evident, or moral truths), but simply the power of seeing many things together, at once, at the same time. The commonest and clearest example of

intuition in this wide sense is ordinary perception. I look at the desk in front of me with its books and papers. I can take in all of this in much less time than the time it takes to say it, in less than a single instant.....We start, as has been said, with the intuition of a field. It has wholeness, but it is vaguely apprehended. By noticing this part and that, and by attending, sometimes with great attention and at great length, to a part or parts only, one is able subsequently to return to their relations within the larger field, and to become aware of the larger field vaguely and with some clarification and illumination. A familiar example is the experience of hearing a hitherto unknown piece of music. One may listen to a work of Brahms, for instance, getting at first a general, but vague and blurred impression. Study of the work means some analysis of it, some paying attention to its parts. In time, and with familiarity, the intuition of the whole is illuminated and enriched, so that what was a vague complex is now sharpened and discriminated, in a process in which analysis and synthesis are two aspects".¹¹⁴

Even the scientist, before he proceeds to analyse an object into its component elements, has some knowledge of the object as a whole. Thus, the chemist has his compound before him as a whole which he can analyse into its constituent parts. Hence, it cannot be disputed that in our experience it is not discrete, unrelated particulars that are really given but rather the object, the thing or the substance with its complex structure. There can be no escape from this unquestionable fact. Everything else is mere sophistry.

In the light of what has been said so far, it is vitally important and interesting to understand the cardinal features of Viśiṣṭādvaita epistemology which is completely immune from the disabilities which encumber both the Buddhist and the *Advaita*

114. Louis Arnaud Reid, *Ways of Knowledge and Experience*, pp. 13-15.

theories of knowledge and perception. All distinctions of thought, all the universals or categories, in terms of which we know objects, are treated in both Buddhism and *Advaita* as impositions of subjective ideas on the given reality. This reminds us somewhat of the reasoning of Kant. Such a procedure, evidently, is the inevitable consequence of not regarding experience and reality as a continuum. Elements which in our experience are originally found existing together and are organically related, are supposed by the analytic habit of thinking to be initially unrelated and cut off from one another. It seems really paradoxical and strange that the monist philosophy of *Advaita* should fall back on this atomistic standpoint of the Buddhist for fortifying the doctrine of absolute monism. The interest of *Advaita* is obvious, and this is unquestionably its defence of absolute or abstract identity and the elimination, as utterly inconceivable notions, of difference, and of quality forming a feature of the substance. The doctrine of indeterminate *Brahman* can be established only if the possibility of difference or of the category of relation and quality is absolutely ruled out, because the problem of the reality of difference or, for the matter of that, of relation or quality is in point of fact one and the same problem. But once it is taken for granted, on the basis of what we experience, that the object or substance is what it is found to be, there seems to be absolutely no room for such objections as *Advaita* seems to fabricate with a view to maintaining its own point of view.

Ramanuja has taken up this problem very earnestly and has argued with great vigour that in experience all the elements which we on subsequent analysis find to be cut off and unrelated to one another, are given in their harmonious or, we might also say, inseparable co-existence. The onus of proving how they exist together or how they are related falls not on the side of Viśiṣṭādvaita, but rather on the side of *Advaita* itself. The difficulty of the analytic method, doubtless, is that if a thing is analysed into its constituent elements, the original unity of it

cannot always be restored or reconstituted by synthesis. Such objections as *Advaita* advances, are bound to arise if what is really concrete identity, is regarded as abstract identity and is analysed into its component elements, giving us the false impression that the unity of the object is a fiction and that the truth of it is to be found only in its elements, the combination of which gives us as a matter of mere convention the notion of a thing or a substance which does not exist at all.

Rāmaṇuja says that the object of perception is always something qualified by the universal and such other properties.

वस्तुसंस्थानरूपजात्यादिलक्षणमेदविशिष्टविषयमेव प्रत्यक्षम् । 115

It is not mere being, a mere 'what' that is ever perceived by us. Even a child or a mute does not perceive mere being. There is no doubt that they perceive reality with its determinations. Only they do not have thoughts or language to express the contents of what they see or perceive. Things are, therefore, already determined, their qualities and differences constitute their specific difference and are the basis of their being discriminated from one another, so far as our practical interests in life are concerned. The question is whether things given in our ordinary, immediate consciousness serve one and the same purpose, have one and the same name and belong to the same class or have the same structure; or whether we accept or reject them on account of their intrinsic differences. *Advaita* cannot possibly set aside this most evident and unquestionable fact of our immediate consciousness. Hence the objection raised by the *Advaitins* is absolutely baseless. There is no possibility of *regressus ad infinitum* or of circular reasoning.

Bearing in his mind the Buddhist view of absolute particulars, Rāmaṇuja says that even if perception exists for a moment,

difference is all the same perceived, because even in that moment an object is always perceived together with its structure or universal constituted by its differences from other objects and that, for this reason, it is ridiculous to say that determinations or characteristic features of perceived objects are not intrinsic to them, but are imposed on them by our subjective categories or ideas subsequently after we have vaguely perceived them in the first moment of perception.

एकक्षणवर्तित्वेऽपि प्रत्यक्षज्ञानस्य तस्मिन्नेव वस्तुमेदरूप-
तत्संस्थानरूपगोत्वादेर्गृहीतत्वात् क्षणान्तरग्राह्यं न किञ्चिदिह तिष्ठति

116

Hence perception has always for its object something qualified by differences caused by the universal or the structure of an object, its feature or colour or the class to which it belongs and so on, and it is because of the definite nature of the objects as indicated by these considerations that we designate them as belonging to a class by the same name, or consider them to be the objects of one and same thought, concept or idea. Rāmanuja argues: "There is nothing that has no definite nature of its own. To say that anything is indeterminate is not to say that it is devoid of specific features, but only that it is without a particular property. There is absolutely no possibility of ever knowing anything devoid of all characteristic features. All perceptual apprehensions are characterised with reference to their respective objects as 'this is so' because of being qualified by a particular character."

निर्विकल्पकं नाम केनचिद्विशेषणविर्युक्तस्य ग्रहणं, न सर्व-
विशेषरहितस्य । तथाभूतस्य कदाचिदपि ग्रहणादर्शनादनुपपत्तेश्च ।
केनचिद्विशेषेणैदमित्यमिति हि सर्वा प्रतीतिरुपजायते ।¹¹⁷

116. *Śrībhāṣya*, Vol. I, p. 28.117. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Therefore, all things or objects have a nature of their own which is constituted by the different features they possess. These features are not impositions on them from outside or by the human mind. If it is through the categories that we are able to know them, these must be acknowledged to belong to their intrinsic nature. Unless they are already there in the objects, the mind cannot apprehend the objects through them. The problem of substance and quality, therefore, is no problem at all. Both together constitute one thing, one entity, which it is simply for methodological convenience in comprehension that we divide into so many component elements (to which indeed there can be no end).

It follows from this that *Brahman* cannot be undetermined, cannot be without any feature or character. The bearing of this whole discussion centering on substance and attribute or upon the crucial question of *Brahman* being indeterminate or being the eternal abode of perfections, attributes and qualities cannot be denied.

अविद्याया आत्मनः परमार्थतो विभागाभावे वस्तुतोऽप्य-
विद्यैव स्यादात्मा । 118

Substance is not to be taken to be a mere unknown 'x', something mysterious behind its qualities, features or acts. What we can say is true of any object given in our immediate consciousness is equally true of such principles of being as God and man. We can hold neither the human individual, nor the soul, nor God to be without any character or features. The *Advaitin* who calls into question the whole notion of difference, and of qualities and relations, does tacitly acquiesce in the truth of this contention of crucial importance. How can he treat *Brahman* to be the Highest Reality, if it is not different from all

things? If *Brahman* transcends all things, its transcendence is nothing short of its difference from all things. If difference is unintelligible and incomprehensible, how can the *Advaitin* even distinguish his *Brahman* from ignorance or *avidyā*? If there is no difference between *Brahman* and *avidyā*, *Brahman* is the same as *avidyā*. The problem of character or qualities, or of the characteristic features that reality must possess, cannot be separated from the problem of substance.

The notion of substance as an abstraction, an unknown 'x', 'Something I know not what', 'an unknown substratum of known qualities', 'a stuff separate from the qualities or attributes' in which it expresses itself and in terms of which we know what it is, is deemed superannuated in contemporary philosophy and science. Commonsense, however, and even the scientist in his laboratory when he takes up the investigation of an object, have to start with the belief in the reality of an object with its entire structural organisation endowed with a complexity of properties and features. The scientist may analyse substance into its elements and properties and may announce that it is nothing over and above, or in addition to the qualities, say, sound, touch, smell etc. that we perceive. The analytic approach to the problem of substance has thus led to the very abolition of it.

The same habit of thinking is characteristic of Buddhism and *Advaita* which hypostatize qualities and regard them alone as constituting the real. The Buddhist considers momentary psychological conscious states to be the reality, while for the *Advaitin* undifferentiated passive consciousness or awareness is itself the real. There is no question of any owner or substance holding consciousness as its permanent property. All these approaches to the problem of reality are in contradiction to the indisputable testimony of commonsense and common experience which is nearer the truth than philosophical and scientific abstractions.

We have insisted throughout our argument concerning the nature of reality that the doctrine of substance with properties or attributes is inexpugnable from philosophical and theological thinking. If often it is not unqualified diversity or difference, not the discrete, momentary particulars that is the truth of our experience of reality and if unity is more fundamental and cannot be dispensed with in our thinking, then the subtleties of scientific thinking apart, we cannot easily carry on without taking things to be relatively independent of one another and acting on one another, bound together by manifold relations, each containing characteristic features which are the basis of their reciprocal differences from one another.

The same is true of human beings with souls as substances which are principles of unity, being the basis of the different activities and powers of knowing, thinking, perceiving, remembering, and so on. The human soul is a subject because, being a single unitary principle behind its diverse activities, it has awareness and memory of all of them and organizes them all in such a way that they become the objects of its consciousness. The subject is known by us as a principle of unity or a substance to which these manifold powers and capacities of sensation, feeling, memory, imagination, thinking etc. belong and which also possesses attributes of goodness, power, wisdom, kindness and so forth. Hence, experience being what it is, the notion of a substance does not point to something quite unknown, nor does it compel belief in something redundant and unwarranted by common experience. When qualities or determinations cannot be discarded, whatever value may be attached to the scientific procedure of reasoning, the pronouncement declaring it, that is, that the substance is a mere chimera, cannot be accepted. The difficulties arise only when we treat substance and the attributes through which it expresses itself as two independent and unrelated notions. As a matter of fact, they are one and no question as to how they cohere and coexist is admissible. The substance is what is revealed through its qualities. The relation of substance

to its qualities is such that any one of the properties and the substance itself involve and are involved in the existence of the rest; and the question how they are connected together or related to the whole is quite illegitimate. After all it is not the elements or properties into which we divide a thing that constitute the truth of it, but rather the interrelationship. As Tagore says: "It is not merely the number of protons and electrons which represents the truth of an element; it is the mystery of their relationship which cannot be analysed".¹¹⁹

There must be some basis in our experience and our linguistic usage because of which we can never think of adjectives without substantives, or of substantives without adjectives. Qualities and relations depend upon something. And a substance is inferred from the qualities and relations we perceive, because what we perceive is a unity or organisation expressing itself in so many determinations, properties or qualities. As Hobbes puts it: "We can conceive no activity whatsoever apart from its subject; e.g., you cannot think of leaping apart from that which leaps, and knowing apart from a knower, or of thinking without a thinker."

Those who reject the notion of substance have to account for the permanence and unity which we find in objects when we experience them and in virtue of which they are given the same designation; how the objects and things which we perceive or know, are taken by us to be relatively independent of one another; and how, again, if there is no such thing as substance, our knowledge and action, in short, our experience itself can arise. Plato went so far as to assert that we can have no knowledge of things if they are changing every moment and that therefore knowledge in the strict sense is possible only of that which is fixed, permanent and eternal. How else, in other words, are we to account for the fact that the things we ordinarily perceive,

119. *Religion of Man*, p. 62.

in spite of the many changes they undergo, and their properties also passing from one state to another, are recognised by us to be one and the same? We are one and the same, in spite of changing interests, thoughts, attitudes and so on. The nature of change itself is such that only that which is changeless can change.

All these facts in our experience, endorse the validity of the concept of substance with its properties or qualities. Both together constitute one entity, and the division or analysis of them into manifold relations, elements or properties in a manner that each of them becomes self-sufficient and independent of one another, is completely unwarranted. We need not raise the question as to how they are related; nor is it proper to hold that the substance behind the properties or qualities is quite unknown or unrevealed, because such a conclusion is forced on us only when we treat the analytic method to explain the whole truth about the intimate relation of substances and their properties.

Thus, we do not know things or substances except through their properties, attributes or determinations. The fact that they always exist in intimate relation is a self-sufficient proof that the real is always endowed with properties, qualities or determinations. The nature of experience is such that a substance can express itself only in its manifold properties or qualities and, therefore, unity in multiplicity or identity in diversity is just what we cannot doubt as constituting the nature of experience as we have it. This applies to the given world of objects as to the reality of individual selves or souls. What the nature of the real is, has to be understood in terms of our most intimate experience. Our thinking should have this experience for its basis; and the question why experience is such, is illegitimate. Experience and the reality, the object of our experience, are unquestionable and they are what we find them to be, and no question as to why or how they are so, is admissible.

To such a question, we can give no rejoinder other than what Lotze advanced in a similar context, saying that it is nothing short of mere quibbling and therefore quite illegitimate and is as impossible to answer as the unanswerable demand to know how the real is what it is and how it is made. Why there is being, how things come to exist, how there is existence at all and how reality, existence or experience with its characteristic features is what it is, are questions which even omniscience cannot enable us to answer. We have simply to accept reality and experience as they confront us.

The personality of God is of crucial importance to religion. There are many philosophers who do not hold the personality of God to be essential to religion. But, if we refuse to hold to the ordinary view of religion, which is doubtless the true view, that it means personal intercourse or communion between man and God which is also involved in and expressed by such activities as worship and prayer, devotion and surrender, what other connotation or meaning can religion have? One is free to interpret the term 'religion' in any manner one likes and assign any particular meaning to it according to one's own free choice and mental outlook. But if this term suggests a definite idea which is not very flexible and which points to its essential nature as an autonomous activity distinct from all other activities, then it cannot mean anything else than a conscious relationship to God, and just because a relation with Him can be established, He must be personal. How can this relation be impersonal like that in which the scientist stands to the object of his inquiry? The relationship between God and man encompasses and embraces the whole personality of man, his whole mind, heart and will, so that God, if religion means all this, cannot be impersonal.

Vishistadvaita provides the theoretical foundation for religion exactly in this sense, and if Hinduism is more truly represented by it than by *Advaita*, then the common Western

To such a question, we can give no rejoinder other than what Lotze advanced in a similar context, saying that it is nothing short of mere quibbling and therefore quite illegitimate and is as impossible to answer as the unanswerable demand to know how the real is what it is and how it is made. Why there is being, how things come to exist, how there is existence at all and how reality, existence or experience with its characteristic features is what it is, are questions which even omniscience cannot enable us to answer. We have simply to accept reality and experience as they confront us.

The personality of God is of crucial importance to religion. There are many philosophers who do not hold the personality of God to be essential to religion. But, if we refuse to hold to the ordinary view of religion, which is doubtless the true view, that it means personal intercourse or communion between man and God which is also involved in and expressed by such activities as worship and prayer, devotion and surrender, what other connotation or meaning can religion have? One is free to interpret the term 'religion' in any manner one likes and assign any particular meaning to it according to one's own free choice and mental outlook. But if this term suggests a definite idea which is not very flexible and which points to its essential nature as an autonomous activity distinct from all other activities, then it cannot mean anything else than a conscious relationship to God, and just because a relation with Him can be established, He must be personal. How can this relation be impersonal like that in which the scientist stands to the object of his inquiry? The relationship between God and man encompasses and embraces the whole personality of man, his whole mind, heart and will, so that God, if religion means all this, cannot be impersonal.

Viśiṣṭādvaita provides the theoretical foundation for religion exactly in this sense, and if Hinduism is more truly represented by it than by *Advaita*, then the common Western

Edwyn Bevan observes: "In Hinduism itself not all religion is monistic in the full sense: there are the sects which denounce an *Advaita* view of the universe as definitely wrong and assert the eternal difference between God and any human soul. The great religious teacher of the eleventh century, Rāmaṇuja whose followers in South India to-day number millions, attacked the absolute monism of Saṅkara with an outfit of philosophical learning and a dialectical ability as great as any exponents of that view."¹²²

If, thus, religion is not possible without personality and personal values, Ultimate Reality the quest after which is the object of religion, must be personal. This means that God must be the designation of the Ultimate Reality, which being personal, should at least be what personality revealed in man is found to be. The personal intercourse between God and man is possible because there is close similarity between the two. Hence, by way of making the term 'personality' more clear, it has been pointed out that God can be conceived not as an indifferent, impersonal force, but as a self-determining and self-revealing reality, with all values, powers and perfections fully realised in Him. In this chapter it is from a philosophical or theoretical point of view and bearing in mind the Viśiṣṭādvaita idea of God, an attempt has been made to vindicate or defend the conception of personal God. The inquiry and interpretation, as one can see, are on the lines of natural theology. Natural theology frames its conception of God on the basis of the data supplied by human experience. Emphasis, however, on natural theology must not mislead one into the error of thinking that Divine revelation in the sphere of the interpretation of religious experience is meaningless. In fact, there is no hard and fast line of demarcation between revelation and religion; our experience in all its range is revelation so that even the knowledge

and discovery of God by reason may be treated to be a divine revelation. Viṣiṣṭādvaita, with its insistence on revelation, does not altogether discredit or underrate or belittle the value of reason. That is why in this chapter, it has been my intention to examine the fundamental tenets of the Viṣiṣṭādvaita view of God mainly on the basis of experience and reason.

CHAPTER V

VISIṢṬĀDVAITA IDEA OF GOD IN THE UPANISADS

I. Unity of Authority, Reason and Experience

It would not be quite a correct estimate of Hindu religious thought to hold that it is exclusively based upon authority, revelation or scripture. A close study will help us to appreciate its genius which lays hold of not one particular standpoint for the knowledge and experience of Reality, but rather takes into account all possible approaches to it, so that the truth that is the reward of its incessant endeavour is found by it to be manysided. While revelation is the starting point, reason is not discarded: for both are complementary to each other. The Hindu approach to the problem of Reality is not at all dogmatic, but is out and out rational.

As Max Muller puts it: "And here we should mark a curious feature of orthodox Indian philosophy. Though the *Vedānta* appeals to the *Veda*, it appeals to it, not as having itself grown out of it or as belonging to it, but rather as an independent witness, looking back to it for sanction and confirmation. The same applies, though in a less degree, to other systems also. They all speak as if they had for several generations elaborated their doctrines independently, and, after they had done so, they seem to come back to get the approval of the *Veda*, or to establish their conformity with the *Veda*, as the recognised highest authority."¹²³

¹²³. Max Muller, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 143, Oxford, 1899.

Reliance on Vedic authority does not amount to subordination to any extra-philosophical standard. The *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads* and the vast corpus of the epics, the *Smpitīs*, the *Purāṇas* and other such works of authority on'y enshrine the direct immediate experience of the spiritual and religious truths: and truth being one, but manysided, is believed by Indian thinkers to be understandable in the light of knowledge acquired from all possible sources. Even in natural sciences we value the convergence of many standpoints: the validity of a proposition or of a generalization is strengthened if many approaches to a problem lead to the same result. Exclusive adherence to only one class of evidence is symptomatic of a dogmatic attitude. Hindu thinkers believe in the essential unity of all the scriptures and teach that their verdicts should be honoured and respected.

Thus, it has been said that the meaning of the *Vedas* should be supplemented or enlarged by *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*; "The *Veda* should be amplified and supported by the *Itihāsas* and the *Purāṇas* because the *Veda* is afraid of him who has little learning that he would do it wrong."¹²⁴

Commenting on this text, Rāmānuja says that "to amplify and support is indeed to elucidate the meanings of the *Vedic* passages which are known to oneself by means of the sayings of those who know all the *Vedas* and their meanings, and who have, by the great power of their *yoga*, directly perceived the things constituting the truth of the *Vedas*. Amplification and confirmation, indeed, have necessarily to be effected (in connection with the import of the *Vedic* passages), because it is difficult to understand the meanings of all the passages found in all the recensions of the *Vedas* by knowing only a small part thereof, and it is in consequence impossible to attain certainty without that (amplification and confirmation)."¹²⁵

124. *Mahābhārata*, I. 1. 264.

125. Rangacharya, *The Vedānta-Sūtras with the Śrībhāṣya of Rāmānujācārya translated into English*, Vol. I, pp. 118-9, Madras, 1901: *Sārtrakamīśaśāstrābhāṣya*, Vol. I, R. Venkatesvara & Co., Madras, 1930, pp. 63-4.

If experience is essentially one, there can be no irreconcilable antagonism between reason and revelation. No school of *Vedānta* insists on the exclusive reliance on a complacent, uncritical belief in mere authority. The different schools of *Vedānta* can be harmonized as different stages in the experience of truth. They lay stress on the different aspects or sides of the same Reality or God, and their testimony as revelations of the nature of the ultimate truth cannot be questioned since they have sprung from the soil of direct experience.

But the direct, immediate confrontation with reality is the product of a prolonged intellectual and moral training and discipline. *Śruti*, *tarka* and *anubhava* (authority, reasoning and experience) envisage a graduated scheme of steady spiritual progress. In the preliminary stages, one has the authority of scripture, which in its turn is the record of the spiritual experiences of the masters in the field. If any progress is to be made, it can be only by first putting trust in that which can be accepted at second hand. Scriptural authority, however, is only a preliminary stage, which must lead through ratiocination and critical inquiry to the direct experience of truth. This stage is called *śravaṇa* or hearing. One learns from others or from scripture. This stage is indispensable, because unless we first receive what has to be examined, there will be nothing left for us to form the content of direct, immediate experience.

Śravaṇa or reception of authority is the beginning of the procedure charted out for making spiritual progress. What is accepted on the authority of the teacher and scripture has to be tested in the crucible of hard thinking and reflection. We believe in order to understand, as Augustine said. "Not all who believe think, but he who thinks believes. He believes in thinking and thinks in believing."¹²⁶ One is required to reflect

126. Quoted in John Baillie, *Invitation to Pilgrimage*, p. 42, Penguin books p. 42.

upon what one has learnt from teachers or scriptures. Nothing, therefore, which has not been found to be rationally justifiable and intellectually convincing to the mind can be raised to the highest status of truth. Hindu thinkers consider only personal realization or experience of the truth, accepted at second hand in the former two stages, to be the standard and touchstone of truth. Only when what is received is found to be what it is claimed to be, can one convert what is a matter of indirect experience into an immediate or direct one.¹²⁷

In the ultimate analysis, therefore, all knowledge has to culminate in what is called *darsana* or immediate knowledge and experience, to which the previous stages are directed and for which they prepare the congenial soil in which the seeds of faith can be sown. Philosophy in India is direct, immediate confrontation with reality. Neither the authority of scripture nor inferential or syllogistic reasoning can by itself get us into the heart and centre of truth. This absolves Indian philosophy from even the slightest tinge of dogmatism.

In the stage of highest spiritual perfection, therefore, all indirect knowledge gained through scripture and imparted by the teacher is stripped of its final meaning and force. It is in this stage that religious truth, when it is part of one's personal experience and realization, is said to command self-evidential value, *svataḥ-pramāṇa*. Truth is not something imposed on us but has to be seen to be true. In Greek language, the word '*oida*' for the English 'I know' is the perfect of the verb 'to see,' which means 'I have seen', as in the well known: "I have seen this great *Purusa*."¹²⁸

127. श्रोतव्यं श्रुतिवाक्येभ्यो मन्तव्यश्चोपपत्तिमिः ।
मत्वा च सततं ध्येयं एते दर्शनहेतवः ॥

128. वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तम् । *Taitt. Ār.* III, 12, 7.

Experience, realization, direct immediate confrontation with reality is the final court of appeal. There is nothing unphilosophical in invoking the testimony of seers for the confirmation of truth verified in one's personal knowledge and experience. Ramanuja firmly believes in the integrity and authenticity of experience in all its levels, for it may be granted that they all shed light on the different aspects or facets of truth. These methods of knowledge lead the spiritual pilgrim, steadily and gradually, to the direct experience of God. The information and knowledge they impart, though divergent and corresponding to different levels of spiritual maturity, culminate in experience; and hence their pronouncements on the different aspects of the nature of reality cannot be conflicting. There is no unwarranted intrusion of one level of knowledge and experience on another, because they are only successive stages in the march for the perception and direct knowledge of truth.¹²³

Hindu thinkers attach equal value to reason, revelation and experience. Direct personal intercourse with reality is the very consummation of the process of spiritual discovery in which it culminates; but even revelation and reason are helpful in giving us credible information respecting the nature of reality. Indeed, even reason and revelation come to be regarded as authentic only if they are the outcome of long and arduous moral and spiritual culture. Insights and truths which have already been experienced and which, for those who are merely treading on the spiritual path, are mere sign-posts, are themselves to be verified in one's own personal experience. As Radhakrishnan points out: "Ordinarily the study of the *Vedas* is a quickening influence. But when once we have the awakening which is sufficient unto

123. न च प्रमाणं प्रमाणान्तरेण विद्ध्यते । प्रमाणान्तराविषयमेव हि प्रमाणान्तरं ज्ञापयति ।

Satka's commentary on *Bṛih. Up.* II, 1, 20.

itself, we need no external aid and so pass beyond *śahdabrahma* or any institutional guidance. One who proposes to cross a river needs a boat, but 'let him no longer use the Law as a means of arrival when he has arrived'. (*Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 135)" 130

These methods of knowledge are indeed continuous with one another and lead to God-realisation. Since these methods of knowledge, thus, are not contradictory to one another, but are reciprocally complementary, one should start with belief in their validity until one is confronted by any evidence incompatible with them. It is in the light, therefore, of the integrity, oneness and fundamental unity of all these sources of knowledge that any real progress can be made in the textual interpretation of scriptures.

Revelation, Authority and Scripture, if they are claimed to be divine and infallible and to contain the verdict of God, cannot consist of mutually contradictory or incoherent statements. The experiences which they set forth being coherent, the rules for the interpretation of them must be strictly adhered to. It is the realisation of this need that led to the origin of the *Mīmāṃsā* school of philosophy of Jaimini which has laid down rules for the interpretation of the revealed texts. In the matter of the interpretation of the texts of the scriptures, their competence and validity is still unquestioned.

II. *Pantheistic Interpretation of the Upanisads*

We have now to examine the widespread view put forward mostly by Western writers that Hindu scriptures do not support the theistic view of reality and that one cannot hope to find in them any systematic, coherent doctrine of a personal, self-revealing, self-determining God, a conscious relation to whom or

a personal intercourse alone with whom can be designated religion. Sir Charles Eliot, the author of three bulky volumes on Hinduism and Buddhism, says: "All Indian theism seems to me to have a pantheistic tinge and India is certainly the classic land of Pantheism" ¹³¹ Hinduism produces systems which can hardly be refused the name of religion and yet are hardly theistic. ¹³² "Immortality is not necessary for religion, nor is God the full Absolute, the ultimate truth." ¹³³ "Monotheism has always a pantheistic tinge." ¹³⁴ The learned author makes the sweeping generalisation that "pantheism in India is not a philosophical speculation; it is a habit of mind; that is to say, the pantheistic view is a real basis of Indian religious thought." ¹³⁵

Sir Charles Eliot is one amongst many who have put forward similar estimates of Hinduism. The well-known philosopher and psychologist, William James, brands Hinduism as monistic: "There are moments of discouragement in us all, when we are sick of self and tired of vainly striving. Our own life breaks down, and we fall into the attitude of the prodigal son. We mistrust the chances of things. We want a universe where we can just give up, fall on our father's neck, and be absorbed into the absolute life as a drop of water melts into the river or the sea. The peace and rest, the security desiderated at such moments is security against the bewildering accidents of so much finite experience. *Nirvana* means safety from this everlasting round of adventures of which the world of sense consists. The Hindoo and the Buddhist, for this is essentially their

¹³¹. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, pp. c, cl, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1957.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. c.

¹³³. *Ibid.*, xc.

¹³⁴. *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

¹³⁵. *Ibid.*, pp. xi, xiv.

attitude, are simply afraid, afraid of more experience, afraid of life. And to men of this complexion, religious monism comes with its consoling words: 'All is needed and essential—even you with your sick soul and heart. All are one with God, and with God all is well. The everlasting arms are beneath, whether in the world of finite appearance you seem to fail or to succeed'. There can be no doubt that when men are reduced to their last sick extremity, absolutism is the only saving scheme. Pluralistic moralism simply makes their teeth chatter, it refrigerates the very heart within their breast".¹³⁶

Dean Rashdall alleges that Hinduism adheres to the pantheistic view of reality which is all-inclusive in character so that no room is left for other orders of reality.¹³⁷ E. L. Mascall also treats Hinduism and Buddhism as akin to each other and contrasts the Western view of religion with the Hindu view by saying that while personality is fundamental to the former, it carries no meaning to the latter.¹³⁸ Even the fact that in recent Indian thought, however, the traditional *advaita* has undergone radical transformation and reinterpretation in which the values of the world are reaffirmed, is taken to be evidence of the influence of Christianity.

The French thinker, Bergson, observes: "A complete mysticism would have reached this point. It is perhaps to be met with in India, but much later. That enthusiastic charity, that mysticism comparable to the mysticism of Christianity, we find in a Ramakrishna or a Vivekananda, to take only the most recent examples. But Christianity, and this is just the point, had come into the world in the interval. Its influence on India—gone over meanwhile to Islamism—was superficial enough, but to the soul that is predisposed a mere hint, the

136. *Pragmatism and other Essays*, p. 128.

137. *Philosophy and Religion*, p. 104.

138. *He Who Is*, p. 133.

slightest token, is enough. But let us suppose even that the direct action of Christianity, as a dogma, has been practically nil in India. Since it has impregnated the whole of Western civilization, one breathes it, like a perfume, in everything which this civilization brings in its wake. Industrialism itself, as we shall try to prove, springs indirectly from it. And it was industrialism, it was our Western civilization, which unloosed the mysticism of a Ramakrishna or a Vivekananda. This burning, active mysticism could never have been kindled in the days when the Hindu felt he was crushed by Nature and when no human intervention was of any avail. What could be done when inevitable famine doomed millions of wretches to die of starvation? The principal origin of Hindu pessimism lay in this helplessness".¹³⁹

III. *Post-Sāṅkarite Theistic Interpretation*

It is not necessary to weary the reader with similar other estimates of Hinduism. What has been cited above serves only to remind us of the colossal ignorance even among the best minds of the world about the true genius of Hinduism. Naturally this calls for an examination of such statements by reference to the scriptures of Hinduism.

The observation has already been made that though some of the above accusations can be true of the *advaita* doctrine, they can never apply to other forms of Hinduism of which belief in the personality of God and in the different orders of reality and also in the reality of the world and the individual self form the core and essence. Here it is both surprising and amusing to find that to such a learned author as Sir Charles Eliot, even Rāmaṇuja's view appears to be semi-pantheistic.¹⁴⁰ When we look at the development of Indian religious thought, through

139. *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, pp. 228-8.

140. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. III, p. 421.

so many stages, it seems natural that Western scholars should have arrived at such a conclusion. What they found in Hinduism was the inevitable consequence of the interpretation of Hindu scriptures at a time when Buddhism had a firm grip on the Indian mind and when they could not be expounded without incorporating in them a high percentage of the doctrines of the prevailing contemporary faith it was the ambition of Hindu thinkers at that time to attack. This is the impression of Hinduism that one receives from the commentaries written by Śaṅkarācārya on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras*.

In the history of Indian religious thought, Buddhism initiated a radical departure from the realistic thought of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads* when it metamorphosed the *Upaniṣadic* doctrine of the relative reality of the world into that of momentariness and ultimately established on philosophical grounds the falsity of the world. While in the *Upaniṣads* emphasis is laid on the transformation and sublimation of desires, Buddhism taught escape from the weary round of existence as the ultimate goal of life and extinction of will as the means to its attainment. In early Buddhism the very personality of the self was condemned as the root cause of all evil. In such a philosophical attitude, action can have no significant value.

Gauḍapāda, who attempted to interpret the *Upaniṣads* for the first time on Buddhist lines, extracted from them a body of doctrines very much similar in spirit and import to Buddhism. His affiliation to Buddhism was so unqualified that Dasgupta suspects him to be a Buddhist.¹⁴¹

“Gauḍapāda,” he says, “assimilated all the Buddhist *Sūnyavāda* and *Vijñānavāda* teachings, and thought that these

141. Surendra Nath Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 423.

held good of the ultimate truth preached by the *Upaniṣads*. It is immaterial whether he was a Hindu or Buddhist, so long as we are sure that he had the highest respect for the Buddha and for the teachings which he believed to be his. Gauḍapāda took the smallest *Upaniṣads* to comment upon, probably because he wished to give his opinions, unrestricted by the textual limitations of the bigger ones. His main emphasis is on the thesis that the great Buddhist truth of indefinable and unspeakable *viññāna* or vacuity would hold good of the highest *ātman* of the *Upaniṣads*, and he thus laid the foundation of a revival of the *Upaniṣad* studies on Buddhist lines. How far the *Upaniṣads* guaranteed in detail the truth of Gauḍapāda's views, it was left for his disciple, the great Śaṅkara, to examine and explain".¹⁴² *Advaita Vedānta* has such a high percentage of Buddhist doctrines in it, that Dasgupta along with many other traditional exponents of the *Upaniṣads* treat it to be no better than a compound of *Vijñānavāda* and *Sūnyavāda* Buddhism.¹⁴³

Again: "There seems to be little doubt that these *Upaniṣadic* interpretations were very much influenced by the development of Buddhistic Idealism, and we know that Śāntarakṣita said that his only point of quarrel with the followers of the *Upaniṣads* was in the fact that they admitted one eternal consciousness as the ultimate principle, whereas he admitted only parallel series of consciousness. It may, however, be remembered that there are many important Buddhistic idealists, such as Aśvaghoṣa, Aśaṅga, Vasubandhu, Sthiramati and others, who admitted one eternal consciousness as the ultimate principle".¹⁴⁴

Therefore, he observes: "It seems particularly significant that Śaṅkara should credit Gauḍapāda and not Bādarāyaṇa with recovering the *Upaniṣad* creed".¹⁴⁵

142. *Ibid.*, p. 420.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 494.

144. *Indian Idealism*, p. 149.

145. *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 423.

If therefore Hinduism is what *Advaita* represents it to be, then the above allegations can be said to hold true of it. But Hinduism is more than what *Advaita* represents it to be. *Advaita* is not true of the whole of Hinduism.

Hinduism as understood by Western writers, some of whose estimates have been given above, is not real Hinduism and does not represent the religion which is popular with the Indian people at large. Though such remarks are, of course, not warranted by the basic *Vedāntic* literature, i.e., the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras*, they are bound to exercise a powerful hold on such students of Hinduism as have no access to the texts themselves, leading consequently to the continuance of an utterly distorted view of Indian religious thought.

The religion and philosophy of Viṣiṣṭādvaita, as taught and consolidated by Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika and other *ācāryas* in the same line of thinking, have already dispelled such wrong notions. In merely reproducing them in another language, one cannot certainly claim any originality. However, it is a commonplace that eternal spiritual truths always need restatement and reaffirmation in the language and idiom characteristic of every epoch. The task of making Hinduism intelligible to the modern mind, may be rendered easier and more effective by expressing it in the language and idiom of modern times, and I therefore consider it more helpful to restate the standpoint of Viṣiṣṭādvaita in the light of the interpretations of the texts of scriptures advanced by the celebrated *ācāryas* in this school of thought and religion.

I shall concentrate on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* and try to show in the light of the Viṣiṣṭādvaita interpretation of them that the conception of God as a self-conscious, self-revealing and self-determining reality, one with whom personal relationship can be established and the most appropriate form of relationship with whom is that of prayer, worship and

meditation, to whom the ordinary human response is one of devotion and surrender, has been most explicitly set forth. The *Upaniṣads*, it may be noted at the very outset, cannot be placed on the same footing as the Christian Bible which is obviously a historical record not only of God in action, but also of the Hebrew and Christian races in action. In that reference, one can certainly form no notion of God except the one that emphasizes the personal relationship of God with man. The language of the *Upaniṣads* is quite different because in them one does not so much come across man's dealings with God even in his day-to-day affairs, in political or economic crises, as abstract statements and generalisations of the nature of God, though these latter involve explicit affirmation of the personal form of relationship between God and man. This must not, however, create the misleading impression that there is no place in them for giving expression to man's relations with God or to the experience of his communion or personal intercourse with Him, and for the statement of the concrete forms of the nature, content and value of his relationship with God.

It would be an utterly erroneous estimate of the *Upaniṣadic* view of God to hold, as is conventionally done, that in it there is no room for religious concepts indicative of God's intimate relation with man such as as is suggested in the doctrine of grace, for example. The doctrine of God as personal has many implications as regards the destiny of the finite individual and of the way in which communion with Him can be established. I am convinced that one can, if one approaches the *Upaniṣads* with a non-partisan attitude, find these doctrines very clearly set forth in them. No doubt, the *Upaniṣads* emphasize, by adopting a negative terminology, the transcendence of God and His mysterious nature incomprehensible to the finite intelligence of man. But this is not peculiar to the monistic or pantheistic view of God alone. It figures prominently in the theistic context as well. Similarly, there are passages that seem, on a superficial view, to support the numerical identity of God and

man. But a closer examination of the contexts in which such statements appear, reveals that they aim at bringing home to our minds not that God and man are ontologically one, but that they are distinct spiritual principles, though in essence they possess an identical nature as centres of consciousness

By way of a preliminary to the theistic interpretation of the *Upaniṣads*, it seems necessary to refer to the broad outlines of the point of view for which support is sought in them. These remarks are being made only by way of intellectual preparation for interpreting the *Upaniṣads* in a new light. Of course, in connection with such works as the *Upaniṣads*, much depends upon the way one looks at them. It is not very difficult to extract a philosophy or a system of religious doctrines which is consistent with them, in the sense that all the texts in them deserve to receive the same respect and that no distinction is made among them with the intention of proving that while some doctrines are affirmed in them which are primary, others are definitely therefore secondary in importance.

So far as the *Bhagavadgītā* is concerned, the stanzas in which its doctrines have been set forth, are so clear and unambiguous that a serious student can very easily decide whether others who interpret them are right or wrong. Hence in the treatment of scriptural sanction for the Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine of personal God I shall try to point out how the theistic view of existence rather than the monistic is what the author of the *Bhagavadgītā* propounds. It would be helpful in this connection to point to the glaring mistakes made by the proponents of monism.

IV. Nature of Ultimate Reality

Interpretations of the *Upaniṣads*, whether pantheistic or theistic, leave no doubt as to their view that the ultimate reality is spiritual in nature, this spirituality of the ultimate principle being stated generally by reference to the creation of

the world. Thus, in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. 2. 1), the well-known text, "In the beginning, my dear, this world was just Being (*sat*), one only, without a second",¹⁴⁶ is immediately qualified by another text (VI. 2. 3) which says: "It bethought itself: 'Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself.' It emitted heat. That heat bethought itself: 'Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself'. It emitted water. Therefore, whenever a person grieves or perspires from heat, then water (i.e., either tears or perspiration) is produced."¹⁴⁷ In the *Āitareya* (I. 1. 1), we read: "In the beginning, *Ātman* (Self, Soul), verily, one only, was here, no other winking thing whatever. He bethought himself: 'Let me now create worlds.'"¹⁴⁸ In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (I. 4. 3), the ultimate principle or *Brahman* is stated to have been bored with His loneliness; by way of overcoming it, He divided Himself into the many things and beings of the world. For it is declared that "no one with a self-contained, self-centred or lonely existence is capable of enjoying himself."¹⁴⁹ The same idea is repeated in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II. 6) when it proclaims: "He desired: 'Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself'. He performed austerity. Having performed austerity, He created this whole world, whatever there is here. Having created it, into it, indeed, He entered. Having entered it, He became both the actual (*sat*) and the yon (*tyat*), both the defined (*nirukta*) and the undefined, both the based and the non-based,

146. सदेव सौम्येदमग्रमासीत् एकमेवाद्वितीयम् ।

147. तदैश्वर्यं यदुस्यां प्रजायेयेति तत्तेजोऽसृजत । तस्माद्यत्र क्व च शोचति स्वेदने वा पुरुषस्तेजस एव तद्व्यापो जायन्ते ।

148. आत्मा वा इदमेक एव अग्र मासीन्नान्यत्किञ्चन मिषत् स ईसत् लोकान्नु सृजा इति ।

149. स वै नैव रेमे तस्मादेकाकी न रमते ।

both the conscious (*vijñāna*) and the unconscious, both the real (*satya*) and the false (*anṛta*). As the real, He became whatever there is here. That is what they call the real." 150

There is no warrant, therefore, for the commonplace view that the early *Upaniṣads* differ from the later ones in being pantheistic or monistic rather than theistic. It is said that only in the later *Upaniṣads* like the *Svetāśvatara*, the *Mundaka*, the *Kaṭha* and so on, the Hindu mind steadily advanced in its metaphysical thinking from monism and pantheism to theism. This opinion is generally upheld in academic circles even at the present time when they need a more faithful, critical and dispassionate study and interpretation. As a matter of fact, if one closely scrutinises even the early *Upaniṣads*, one cannot fail to find in them the presentation of the doctrine of Personal God. There is no discontinuity between the early and the later *Upaniṣads*, no abrupt transition from pantheism to theism.

Whether the weight of the texts in the early *Upaniṣads* falls on the theistic view of God or on the monistic or pantheistic side can be settled only after a very intensive and dispassionate study to ascertain whether, so far as the nature of reality is concerned, only bare intelligence is affirmed of it or whether, together with intelligence, will also is attributed to it. One of the important points in which pantheism or monism differs from theism is the treatment by the former of the Ultimate Reality as bare intelligence utterly destitute of will.

Those who extract a monistic view out of the early *Upaniṣads* are intent upon trying to prove that the conception of God as the Supreme Intelligence and Will is alien to their spirit and that their emphasis falls on the assertion that it is of the

150 सोऽकामयत् ॥ बहु स्वां प्रजायेवेति ॥ स तपोऽतप्यत् ॥ स तपस्तप्त्वा ॥ इदं सर्वमसृजत् ॥ यद्विद् किञ्च ॥ तत्सृष्ट्वा ॥ तदेवानु-
प्राविशत् ॥ सच्च त्यजामवत् ॥

nature of pure consciousness or bare intelligence. It is vitally important to bear in mind here that if it is true that all the *Upaniṣads* emphatically affirm that the Ultimate Reality at the root of the universe is a self, then they cannot make the mistake of not instructing us how it is a self. It is possible that as the conception of self is familiar, they might not have cared to explain what the term means. And as everybody knows what it means, what attributes it possesses and what functions it performs, they might not have considered it necessary to expound the idea of God as a self or as a personality after the fashion of a modern text-book of theology or religion.

But it cannot be denied that even the early *Upaniṣads* have put forward a systematic doctrine of the Ultimate Reality as personal God and not as mere impersonal intelligence. It is the singular contribution of the long line of thinkers of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school, like Yāmunaçārya, Rāmaṇujāçārya, Vedānta Deśika and others to establish beyond the possibility of any shred of doubt, that the *Upaniṣads* advocate the doctrine of a personal God, as it was not possible for the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* to conceive of the self as otherwise than personal. Śaṅkara, however, has fixed his eyes mostly on such texts as concentrate on mere intelligence or thought, so that one could interpret such statements in the monistic sense, holding that *Brahman* is mere intelligence and not also the owner of intelligence. But the language of the *Upaniṣads* is archaic and in them, the function of even the substantives which are mostly abstract nouns, is to express the attribute of that with which they are juxtaposed. The intention, doubtless, is not to teach that *Brahman* is mere intelligence and not the owner of both intelligence and will. The final decision on such matters has already been given by Bādarāyaṇa, who has pointed out that a thing is affirmed to be that which it possesses as its essential attribute.¹⁵¹ But, apart from this, it is not true that only such

151. तद्गुणसारत्वाच्च तद्व्यपदेशः । *Brahma-Sūtras*, II. 3. 29.

statements as do not make any distinction in terms of substance and attributes between God and His nature, are to be found in the *Upaniṣads*. Rāmānuja has called attention to numerous texts that describe *Brahman* as possessing many attributes. Thus, we have the declaration that one who knows the bliss of *Brahman* has nothing to fear ¹⁵². This clearly indicates *Brahman* as the substance and bliss as His attribute and the relationship of the finite self with God as exemplified in the subject-object relationship.

The very fact that the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* do not make a hard and fast distinction between such texts as merely indicate *Brahman* by His essence or nature and such other texts as make a distinction between *Brahman* and His nature and the attributes which He possesses demonstrates conclusively that it is far from their intention to think of the Ultimate Reality or *Brahman* as being mere impersonal intelligence and as having therefore no personality. In fact, *Brahman* as mere impersonal intelligence cannot be the source of that supreme joy and of redemption from all sorrows—which is the destiny of the finite self. If these thinkers were serious and uncompromising on the Supreme Reality being impersonal, they would not have made any effort towards making the personality or the concrete nature of God intelligible to us not merely by affirming His existence, but also by endeavouring to tell us what God after all means definitely to us and how, therefore, the term 'God' has a definite connotation. The texts, therefore, must not be taken in isolation or abstraction from one another; because such a distinction has never been made by the *Upaniṣads* themselves. If they hypostatized the finite individual himself in his personal aspect as God, they would rank as no better than psychology or anthropology. But anthropology or psychology is not theology.

152. ज्ञानं ब्रह्मो विद्याय विभेति कुतश्चनेति ॥

Tait. Up. II. 9.

Even in the early *Upaniṣads* metaphysics or the inquiry into the nature of the Ultimate Reality is theology or inquiry into the nature of God, as they teach us that *Brahman* is the Supreme Person. The conception of *Brahman* as a *Puruṣa* or a person is emphatically taught in the *Chāndogya* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* (I 2. 13) tells us that *Brahmavidyā* or metaphysics enables us to know the *Puruṣa* or the Person.¹⁵³

Although the *Mundaka* is reckoned among the later *Upaniṣads*, it cannot be said that it puts forward a conception of *Brahmavidyā* or metaphysics which is utterly different from that of the early *Upaniṣads*. *Brahmavidyā* or systematic knowledge of the Supreme Person cannot be supposed to propound the doctrine of the Impersonal Absolute. Nor can we think that, instead of regarding such knowledge as the supreme object of their inquiry, the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads* were involved in vague metaphysical abstractions which have no meaning for man, howsoever high their value in the sphere of empty dialectic. They could not have been in search of such a power or force behind the universe as has no meaning for man and is not such that, as modern existentialists tell us, the relationship with Him is not existential. In fact, the whole thinking of the *Upaniṣads*, though not existential in the modern sense of the term, is certainly existential in spirit in the sense that any talk about it would be utterly pointless if *Brahman* had no meaning for man. In other words, it is just because *Brahman* or God had a definite meaning for him that they entered upon their inquiry.

V. Theistic Emphasis in Radhakrishnan's Interpretation of the 'Upaniṣads'

In some brilliant studies of the *Upaniṣads*, a resolute attempt has been made to meet the criticisms of the *Upaniṣadic* view of Reality and its relation to the world and the finite

153. येनाक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम् ।

human individual. In the fairly elaborate exposition of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, for example, in his *Indian Philosophy* (Vol. I), Radhakrishnan has dispelled all such misconceptions as Western writers were accustomed to advance in their distorted and misleading accounts of them. He has definitely done much to make the Western mind understand that a pessimistic and impersonal view of existence is not taught in the *Upaniṣads*. Moreover, he has convincingly shown that it is not abstract monism but rather a concrete monism, not the denial of plurality and difference as such, but rather plurality and difference as the revelation and expression of *Brahman*, not the falsity of the world but rather its reality, that has been taught in the *Upaniṣads*.

Such an interpretation of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* is really in consonance with the tenets of Viśiṣṭādvaita or Rāmānuja's interpretation of them. Even though Radhakrishnan has immense regard for the genius of Śaṅkarācārya, the limitations of his interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* do not escape his notice. He has frankly admitted that the anxiety on Śaṅkara's part to reconcile the incompatible currents of thought of Buddhism and the *Upaniṣads* is responsible for the inconsistencies and contradictions that affect the integrity of his thinking. He observes that Śaṅkara sought to show that *Vedānta* could satisfy even those brought up in or influenced by Buddhist ways of thinking. The difficulty in the task was that while the ancient sages of India "believed in all-embracing divinity" and condemned voluptuous indulgence without demanding the renunciation of "the delights of the world", Buddhism denied the need for belief in God and advocated withdrawal from the world. So "Śaṅkara, without touching the root principles of Vedāntism, grafted on to it the Buddhist principles of *māyā* and monasticism." Unable to give up God or the Absolute, he yet agrees with the Buddhist in holding the finite to be unreal. In that case "his Absolute becomes something in which all is lost and nothing is found again," as "even permanence becomes

reduced to unreality". However, Sāṅkara looks upon the Absolute as "pure affirmation or fullness of being". "Here and there," Radhakrishnan goes on, "we come across passages where Sāṅkara holds to the right view of the relation between the world and the Absolute. But these have lost their force, as passages pointing to an opposite view are to be met with frequently in Sāṅkara's writings, and as the interpreters of Sāṅkara's system have practically ignored it. But there is no denying that the positive method Sāṅkara intends to pursue as a Vedāntin and the negative method he does sometimes pursue as an interpreter of Buddhism, end in conflict and contradiction".¹⁵⁴

Radhakrishnan indeed thinks that *advaita* is a revised version of Mādhyamika metaphysics in Vedic terminology: "Through the influence of Buddhism and its schools, the non-dual nature of reality and the phenomenal nature of the world came to be emphasised in the systems of Gauḍapāda and Sāṅkara. As a matter of fact, such an advaitic philosophy seems to be only a revised version of the Mādhyamika metaphysics in Vedic terminology. The religious reconstruction of the epics and the *Bhagavadgītā* and the theistic emphasis in the Nyāya, led to the development of the Viśiṣṭādvaita, or modified monism of Rāmānuja. As a matter of fact, the non-dualists or Advaitins are called Paśisuddha Saugatas or purified Buddhists, and the Viśiṣṭādvaitins Paśisuddha Naiyāyikas or purified Nyāya followers".¹⁵⁵

The above estimate of Sāṅkara's interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* serves to remind us that much that is usually grafted on the *Upaniṣads* does not really represent their original

154. *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, pp. 73-74, Good Companions Publishers, Baroda, 1961.

155. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 259, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London, 1948.

teachings Dr. S. N. Dasgupta says: "Saṅkara and his followers borrowed much of their dialectic form of criticism from the Buddhists. His *Brahman* was very much like the *śūnya* of Nāgārjuna. It is difficult indeed to distinguish between pure being and pure non-being as a category. The debts of Saṅkara to the self-luminosity of the Vijñānavāda Buddhism can hardly be overestimated. There seems to be much truth in the accusations against Saṅkara by Vijñāna Bhikṣu and others that he was a hidden Buddhist himself. I am led to think that Saṅkara's philosophy is largely a compound of Vijñānavāda and Śūnyavāda Buddhism with the *Upaniṣad* notion of the permanence of self superadded".¹⁵⁶

If the monistic interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* does not represent their true genius or spirit, then attempts should be made for extracting a philosophy out of them which does justice to all of them as a whole. The exposition of the *Upaniṣads* by Radhakrishnan is certainly a positive contribution in this direction. But, so far as the nature of the Ultimate Reality as a self-revealing, self-determining intelligence and will is concerned, he has left us with mere vague suggestions. The establishment of the doctrine of *Brahman* as such a reality would have certainly marked a turning point in the history of the textual interpretation of Hindu scriptures. The exposition of such ideas as have been only vaguely suggested in the *Upaniṣads*, serving to prove that *Brahman* is no mere abstract intelligence but supreme will also, in no way different from what the Western mind understands the term to point to, would have been a great achievement for the human mind.

The long line of Vedāntic teachers headed by Ramanujacārya has achieved remarkable success in this field. Much remains

¹⁵⁶. A *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp.493-494, University Press, Cambridge, 1951.

still to be done by way of making the same ideas accessible to the Western mind. Taking into account, therefore, this modern necessity of making Indian concepts and ideas understandable to the Western mind, I have made an earnest attempt towards the clear exposition of the philosophical and theological conceptions of Viśiṣṭādvaita so that no longer any room may be left for misguided estimates of the Hindu outlook on spiritual values.

Language and thought are very closely related, and they certainly bear in them the imprint of the genius of a nation. Difference in the language used as the medium of the communication of ideas and thoughts being unavoidable, it is not at all surprising that the guiding principles of our life and culture are misunderstood or denounced by others. But I venture to say that if we realise the importance of the communication of our ideas in the terminology of the West, the great psychological distance between the East and the West can be removed. Now the Western theologian emphasises a sharp difference between the West and the East in the sphere of religious thought by superciliously rejecting the claim that the notion of the Ultimate Reality as a self-revealing and self-manifesting individual, personal being is integral to the latter's way of thinking. Our attempt at the clarification of the whole train of thinking of the *Upaniṣads* has been focused on the repudiation of such a misinformed and untenable assessment of Hindu thought.

If the *Upaniṣads* teach any doctrine of the Ultimate Reality, it is certainly that of a self-revealing, self-determining and self-manifesting mind with the centre of unity in itself, seeking its expression in the world of plurality and difference which is the revelation of its purpose. This is evidently the doctrine of the Infinite Mind with self-conscious intelligence and will constituting Its nature. Thus, in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* one meets with a clear conception of reality as self-determining and self-revealing. It is said that *Brahman* Himself determined

Himself.¹⁵⁷ *Brahman* possesses the power of self-limitation. Similarly, it is said that He desired to multiply Himself into the many.¹⁵⁸ *Brahman* is not free from desire and will, because it is as a result of His desire and self-determining will that He outgrew His self-contained existence, His loneliness, and transformed Himself into the many. That is to say, He desired to reveal Himself through the names and forms of the world or through the things and beings of the world.

It is impossible for us to think that while the *Upaniṣads* affirmed, over and over again, their belief in the existence of the Supreme Mind at the root of the universe, they did not mean anything meaningful or concrete by the term. It is no use conceding that *Ātman* or spirit is the first and final cause of the universe, if all that is implied in the concept, all that we mean when we utter the term, is excluded from it, reducing the highest reality to a bare abstraction. In fact, to declare that which is discerned to be ultimate, the most concrete, all-comprehensive and all-inclusive, to be an unknown amounts to self-contradiction.

Brahman, invariably affirmed to be spiritual in nature, and yet stripped of all the determinations and characteristic features attributed to It, becomes no better than an unknown brute fact belonging to the same species as the facts of the physical order. The *Upaniṣads* cannot be accused of accounting for our experience of the world and of all things and beings in it, in terms of a *Brahman* who is destitute of a concrete personality and hardly any better than an empty idea. In other words, the term '*Ātman*' is never connotative of pure consciousness, as the proponents of absolute monism contend. The thinkers of the

157. तदात्मानं स्वयमकुरुत ।

Taitt. Up., II. 7.

158. सोऽकामयत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति ।

Ibid. II. 8.

Upaniṣads seem to make out that the *Ātman* is pure consciousness, not because It does not possess those characteristic features which are commonly experienced by us, but because Its psychical properties and characteristics are not the products of extrinsic physical or corporeal conditions or circumstances. This is the legitimate meaning of *Ātman* as pure consciousness. There is in the *Upaniṣads* no trace of the *advaitic* distinction between the transcendental and the empirical consciousness, for all the experiences in which the *Ātman* expresses Itself really belong to It intrinsically. *Brahman*, therefore, has desires and has the power to limit Himself. The power of self-limitation belongs exclusively to the spirit or the *Ātman*. It would be utterly erroneous to hold that *Brahman* in the *Upaniṣads* has no desire and no will. In the references heré quoted, clear indications of the possession of the power of self-limitation and self-determination are to be found. It is in virtue of this power of self-determination and self-revelation that in many passages of the *Upaniṣads*, *Brahman* has been stated to have transformed the previously existing world from an unmanifest form to a manifest one. Lest we should lapse into the error of thinking either that the world is not grounded in a spiritual reality or that *Brahman* has no concern for the world, the *Upaniṣads* remind us, again and again, of the power of self-limitation that He possesses in virtue of which He divides Himself into plurality and difference. 'He becomes one'; 'He becomes two'; 'He becomes five'.¹⁵⁹ In fact, Śaṅkara comes to accept the Rāmanujist point of view of the inseparable relation of the world (*aprthaksiddhi*) with God, when he vindicates the doctrine of the pre-existence of the effect in the cause.

He argues: "Whatever does not exist in something (which constitutes its essence, substance or stuff) is not produced out

159. स एकधा भवति त्रिधा भवति पञ्चधा भवति ।

Ch. Up., VII, 26. 2.

of it; for example, oil is not produced out of sand. Hence it follows that because of non-difference (between the cause and the effect) prior to the production (of the effect), the effect, even after it is produced, continues to be non-different from the cause. Further, as the cause, *Brahman* who exists in all time never suffers any change in regard to its existence, so also the effect, the world, existing in all the three times, does not suffer any change in regard to its existence. But since, again, reality is one only, it follows that the effect is non-different from the cause." 160 Śaṅkara admits the reality of the world here. If the world exists in some form or other always, how can it be a product of illusion? The plain meaning of such statements cannot be understood if *Brahman* does not possess the power of self-limitation. Stripped of this power, *Brahman* cannot be infinite, omnipotent and intelligent. After this brief introduction to the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, we may now take up a few of them individually for more detailed study.

VI. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*

Of all the older *Upaniṣads* the *Chāndogya* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* are esteemed as providing us with the most decisive backgrounds of philosophical thinking. All Vedic teachers, theistic and non-theistic, count upon them as lending support to their philosophical and religious doctrines. Both the

160. यदात्मना यत्र न वर्तते न तत्तत् उत्पद्यते, यथा सिकताभ्य-
स्तौलम् । नस्मात्प्रागुत्पत्तेरनन्यत्वादुत्पन्नमप्यनन्यदेव कारणात्कार्य-
मित्यवगम्यते । यथा च कारणं ब्रह्म त्रिषु कालेषु सर्वं न व्यभिचरति
एवं कार्यमपि जगत् त्रिषु कालेषु सर्वं न व्यभिचरति । एकं च पुनः
सत्त्वमतोऽप्यनन्यत्वं कारणात्कार्यस्य ।

Brahma-Sūtras, II. 1. 16, Śaṅkara's commentary,

Chāndogya and the *Bṛhādarāyaka* belong to the earlier *Brahmaṇa* literature and contain philosophical materials interlaced with ritualistic details. The very fact that they deal also with the performance of sacrifices and give details about rituals proves their early date. There is no disagreement among scholars about this. Not only do we get in these *Upaniṣads* an insight into the nature of contemporary social structure, but also a clear articulation of the philosophical opinions entertained by prominent thinkers. From these philosophical opinions and doctrines, we can formulate the definite philosophical point of view which engaged their attention and absorbed their whole thinking.

At the very outset, we must point out that these *Upaniṣads*, though abounding in philosophical and religious discussions, are nevertheless not completely hostile to the earlier ritualistic religion. Though indicating a transition from the earlier ritualistic religion, they cannot be said to condemn it completely. It would be a flagrant error to hold that there is an unmediated opposition between the earlier *Brahmaṇa* literature and the *Upaniṣadic* thinking. The *Upaniṣads* as a whole attack the earlier ritualistic religion considered as an end in itself, but not if regarded as a subordinate means to the higher interests of moral and spiritual life. Both the *Chāndogya* and the *Bṛhādarāyaka* give a symbolic interpretation to the cult of sacrifices and rituals, instead of rejecting it wholesale. According to the traditional orthodox view, the *Upaniṣads* are continuous with the *Vedas*; instead of rejecting altogether the earlier sacrificial religion, they put such an interpretation on it as makes the human mind itself rise steadily to the perspective of higher spiritual truths.

But there is a difference of outlook between the *Chāndogya* and the *Bṛhādarāyaka* to which scholars have called attention. Prof. Hiriyanna observes that the *Chāndogya* and the *Bṛhādarāyaka* differ from each other in advocating what he calls the cosmic and acosmic philosophical doctrines. He describes

the world outlook of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* which seeks to establish the reality of the world along with that of its Creator or the Ultimate Cause to which it can be traced. In the *niṣprapañca-vāda* of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, emphasis is laid more on the nature of *Brahman* than on the world, so that the exclusive attention paid to the former often results in excluding from it the reality of the latter. In order, therefore, to ascertain the nature of the philosophical doctrines of both the *Upaniṣads*, it is necessary to dwell upon the positive doctrines of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* before we scrutinise those of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It is more appropriate to consider what the positive conceptions of the former are than to dwell upon any predominantly negative concepts, if this view of Prof. Hiriyanna is held to be incontestable.

Closer study of *Upaniṣads* as a whole does not warrant such a generalisation as that their conclusions and insights may be taken to be so diametrically opposed to one another that no single coherent and systematic philosophical and religious system can be extracted from them. The fact that many attempts have been made in the past to extract such a consistent body of doctrines and beliefs from them is a clear hint at the truth of the conclusion that they were certainly regarded as putting forward one coherent system of thought. Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahma-sūtras* is perhaps the most authentic record of such attempts made in ancient times, and from it we learn how a systematic and coherent system of religious beliefs can be shown to have been upheld by *Upaniṣadic* thinkers.

The distinctive feature of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is its affirmation of the existence of God and His immanence in it. Man in his ordinary unreflecting contact with the things of the world is prone to lose sight of God's transcendence of it. Nor

does he show any awareness of any transcendent principle immanent in the world. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* lays stress not only on the existence of *Brahman* within the world, but also points out that nothing is real apart from *Brahman*. On the one hand it calls into question the doctrine of *Brahman* as abstract identity and, on the other hand, it teaches that the world is real only as it depends upon God. The *Upaniṣad* turns the ordinary thinking of man from the multiplicity and difference of the world to the principle of unity in which it is grounded and rooted, and apart from which it is deprived of its reality and existence. The tendency on the part of this *Upaniṣad* is not to deny plurality and multiplicity as such, but plurality and multiplicity as separate from or independent of *Brahman*.

The author of the *Vedānta-sūtras* discusses thirtytwo *vidyās* of which fifteen have been taken by him from the *Chāndogya* alone. The remaining seventeen are distributed over the other *Upaniṣads*. In the opinion of the author of the *Vedānta-sūtras*, therefore, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is decisively more important and significant than the other *Upaniṣads* in the determination of the nature of their teachings. The majority of the *vidyās* could have been taken from this *Upaniṣad* for the reason that they seemed to Bāṇarāyaṇi to be very close to his own views.

Having regard to the general nature of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* as outlined above, we may now examine the fundamental philosophical and religious doctrines propounded in it. From a purely philosophical point of view, the first five chapters are not significant, as they contain a good deal of non-philosophical materials, with hardly any effort at a discussion of the nature of Ultimate Reality, the nature of the world, man's relation to God and other subsidiary matters concerning ethics and religion. The last three chapters (6, 7 and 8) are philosophical, and we have to concentrate upon them. Since tradition places high value on the teachings of this *Upaniṣad*, the philosophical and religious views set forth in it may be taken

to be decisive as to the nature of the general outlook to which philosophers at that time adhered.

(a) THE NATURE OF ULTIMATE REALITY :

The *Upaniṣads*, even though they are regarded as revelation and are taken to be what have been 'heard', are not opposed to the method of natural theology, as they seem to start thinking about the nature and existence of God by reflecting upon the nature of the world. This explains why there is no hard and fast line of demarcation between revealed religion and natural religion, so far as the *Upaniṣads* are concerned. Not only in the *Chāndogya*, but in almost all the *Upaniṣads*, thinking about God has been prompted by the consideration of the nature of the world. In almost all the *Upaniṣads* the question about the Ultimate Reality concerns the nature of the Being from which all things are born, to which they ultimately return and by which in their existence they are sustained. There is, therefore, no *a priori* thinking. The first reality by which man in his experience is confronted, is the given world, and his thinking about himself and about God has to start with his thinking about the origin and nature of the given world.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, it is stated that this world was already existent in the beginning. The demonstrative pronoun, 'this' (*idam*), has reference to this manifest world which existed in an unmanifest form in *Brahman* who is one without a second. Hence, this work absolutely excludes the possibility of any materialistic or naturalistic conception of the origin of this world. To the objection as to how this universe which was non-existent became existent later, the reply given is that it was certainly existent, though in an unmanifest form because being can by no means be supposed to be born of non-being.¹⁶² The

162. कथमसतः सज्जायेत ।

Ch. Up. (VI. 2. 2)

passage indubitably enunciates an idealistic view of reality, holding that *Brahman*, the Supreme Mind, was at the root of the universe and that it is by Him that it was brought from an unmanifest to the manifest form. Once again here we do not meet with any evidence of *Brahman* being regarded as impersonal, and without consciousness or will. On the contrary, in this passage itself, self-determination and will are attributed to God. It is declared that *Brahman* was prompted by the desire to multiply Himself in order to transcend His loneliness and to transform Himself into many.¹⁶³ In execution of His desire and will, it is said that He created fire and water and then food.

Thus, at the very outset, the *Upaniṣad* starts with the conception of *Brahman* as a self-determining and self-revealing reality. In attributing creative activity to God, it does not isolate Him from the world after He has created it, in the fashion of the eighteenth-century deism. Not only does God multiply Himself and create all the things and beings of the universe; but having created them, He also enters into them as their permanent living power, so that it is through His entrance into the world that He differentiates Himself into all the names and forms of which it consists.

The immanence of *Brahman* in all the things and beings of the world has been explained on the analogy of the existence of salt in water. Just as salt is inseparably blended with water, so also *Brahman* is present in all things, and it is because of His presence in all things that we do not have a conscious awareness of Him, just as we are not aware of the air we breathe, unless we suffer from suffocation. Our immediate awareness of God can be similarly explained. In this way the immanence of *Brahman* in all things is established and our immediate intuition

163. बहु स्यां प्रजायेय ।

Ibid., VI. 2. 3.

of Him is hinted at. The analogy of salt and water distinguishes *Brahman* from all things which cannot exist without the immanence of God in them. It teaches, further, that just because *Brahman* is immanent in them, He transcends them also. It is only the transcendent that can be immanent. Hence, although *Brahman* is immanent in the things of the world, in virtue of His transcendence, He is not affected by their imperfections. The possibility of any atheistic identification of God and the world is ruled out. In an aqueous solution of salt, though there is not a single drop of water without salt, salt and water are quite different from each other. Similarly, God and the world, though inseparable, are different from each other. Ontologically, they are different, though in existence they are inseparable.

There is no scope in this *Upaniṣad* either for such transcendence of God as sets Him always at a distance from the world and from the individual soul, or for His complete involvement in time and history. Such a transcendence assigned to God, reduces Him to the status of another finite being. The seers of the *Upaniṣads* cannot be accused of the glaring mistake of conceiving of the Infinite as excluding the finite altogether. If we closely scrutinise the passages in which God's relation to the world is exhibited, we find that transcendence and immanence have been treated as complementary aspects of the Divine. Not only is such a view an indication of God as a really active power in time and history, but from the point of view of religious consciousness only such a conception of the Deity can rightly command the homage of mankind to Him. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* teaches us to take both the infinite and the finite together.

Accordingly, it would be ridiculous to put an acosmic interpretation upon such texts. It follows also that the *Upaniṣad* is interested not only in merely affirming the existence of God at the root of the universe, but also in assigning definite characteristic features to Him and thus in distinguishing Him from

everything else. God here is viewed not only as having desired to create and to multiply Himself, but also to give names and forms to all things. It is just this act of giving names and forms that can be said to be the meaning of God's creative activity.

Such activity is intrinsic to God, because it is an indication of His essential character and cannot, therefore, be supposed to be determined and characterised by conditions existing outside Him, as if there were other positive principles accounting for the features belonging to Him. This is the error committed by *advaita*. For, if *Brahman* has a self-contained existence and yet His powers and functions are caused by conditions existing outside Him. He turns out to be no better than a contingent being, drawing His content from some being of a higher order than His. In thus thinking of *Brahman* and magnifying His transcendence, He is made an imperfect principle which cannot be the object of philosophical contemplation or religious adoration. Thus, from the emphasis on the reality of the world in this *Upaniṣad*, many of the characteristic features of God are shown as intelligible only in the light of the universe by which we are confronted. It is through the world, therefore, that we understand what God is. This does not mean, however, that the nature of God is deduced from the nature of the world, but only that the nature of the world being what it is, it cannot be a self-contained existence and its explanation can be sought for only in something having self-contained reality and existence, i.e., *Brahman*. This is explicitly indicated in the assertion implicit in God being '*Tajjalān*', that is, that from which all creatures are born, by which they are sustained in their existence and to which they ultimately return. Thinking about God starts from thinking about the world.

The text concentrates on the contingency of the finite things and creatures and, as we proceed further, a radical distinction is drawn between the finite and the infinite in terms of the former being contingent and as not being the source of what can give

us ultimate satisfaction, as contrasted with the latter which alone is such a source of eternal happiness. The contingency, however, of the finite order is not a denial of its reality, because it is said that they are all contained in *Brahman* and that they have *Brahman* as the *Sat* as their final source.¹⁶⁴ Time and history are regarded as real, not independently and in a relation from the Infinite, but as sustained by and established in *Brahman*. God's reality does not cancel the reality of the world.

It should be remarked here that the well-known text, declaring all things to be *Brahman*,¹⁶⁵ does not mean what it has been supposed to mean by *Advaita*. The fact that *Brahman*, who is taken in co-ordination with the world, is defined further in terms of *tajjalān* and is commanded to be meditated upon, absolutely precludes the possibility of seeking in the dictum any support for an impersonal, *nirguṇa*, indeterminate, *nirviśeṣa* *Brahman*.

Even Śaṅkara, the exponent of the *Advaita* school, concedes that this is a description of *Saviśeṣa* *Brahman*. It is surprising, however, that he should arbitrarily evaluate this text as descriptive of 'the lower *Brahman*' for which there seems to be no warrant at all. We are to look at the *Upaniṣads* in the light of the statements of which the meaning is unequivocal, categorical and clear. It is an inexcusable error to graft on them our own pet doctrines and prejudices.

There are two other important chapters in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which make it certain that the nature of the Ultimate

164. सन्मूलाः सौम्य इमा सर्वाः प्रजाः सदायतनाः सत्प्रतिष्ठाः
Ibid., VI. 8. 8.

165. सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म तज्जलानिति शास्त्रं उपासीत ।
Ibid., III, 14. 1.

Reality is personal and determinate and not impersonal and indeterminate. It is in the course of the treatment of the nature of the Deity in these chapters that *Brahman* has even been stated to be the Highest *Puruṣa*.¹⁶⁶

The dialogue between Nārada and Sanatkumāra which occurs in the seventh chapter is another systematic treatment of the nature of the Supreme Reality. Nārada who has mastered all the *Vedas* and the *śāstras*, comes to Sanatkumāra and expresses his desire to know the *Ātman*. He says that all his knowledge is pointless and useless without the knowledge of the *Ātman*, because without enlightenment on this subject, there is no possibility of his overcoming the troubles and sorrows of life. As in the dialogue between Indra and Prajāpati, so also here, Nārada, in accordance with the prevailing system of education, is instructed step by step. Sanatkumāra tells him that he should worship *Prāṇa* as one who is an *atīvādīn*, that is, one whose object of worship is other than and superior to those already pointed out to him for being adored and worshipped. The identification of *Brahman* with *Prāṇa* is logical and purposive, because the preliminary stages of enquiry having transcended material and mechanical categories as inadequate, *Prāṇa* or the category of life may be supposed to be the nearest approach to the intelligent principle. The fact that the whole universe is sustained by life or *Prāṇa* might have been felt to be a strong reason for the identification of *Brahman* with it.

But it is not just mere life that is here claimed to be the ultimate principle of the universe; for *Prāṇa* here has been stated to be the father and the mother. Therefore, it would not be proper to think that the *Ātman* being taken to be *Prāṇa* is here the designation of a principle which is without consciousness

166. स उत्तमः पुरुषः ।

Ibid., VIII, 12, 3.

and is no more than mere vital force. Then, Nārada is led a step further when the teacher designates the *Atman* by another category, namely, *Satya* and the requisite steps essential for the attainment of it are proclaimed to be *vijñāna*, *manana*, *śraddhā*, *nishṭhā* and *kṛti*. Obviously, such a description means that it is *Brahman* alone that is variously described as *Satya* or *Prāṇa*, because it is that which gives joy to us. *Satya* leads to fulfilment. Nārada says that he will make a resolve to devote himself to *sukha*, joy.

It is in this context that Sanatkumāra defines *Satya* and identifies it with the Infinite. Hence, *sukha* or joy is what is infinite; there is no joy in what is finite. The three designations, therefore, of *Brahman*, namely, *Satya*, *Sukha* and *Bhūman*, point to nothing other than the Ultimate Reality itself. *Brahman* as the Ultimate Reality is the source of all our happiness. Just because the supreme purpose of human life is the knowledge of *Brahman*, all our knowledge short of that knowledge cannot give us that which we all consciously or unconsciously aspire after. The *Upaniṣad* emphatically asserts that joy consists only in the *Bhūman* or the Infinite. It is a reminder to us that we should not seek our satisfaction in the trivial pleasures of the world.

We have seen this very doctrine taught in other *Upaniṣads* also. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Brahman* alone is pointed out as the source of joy to all.¹⁶⁷ Another *Upaniṣad* declares that no one would have ever lived even for a moment if there were no bliss in the world and that all beings are born of bliss or *ānanda* alone.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, that the *Bhūman* or Infinite is the same as *Brahman* is clear from the fact that, as in the other *Upaniṣads*, so also in the *Chāndogya* He is taken to be the source and fount of infinite bliss. *Brahman* as an impersonal force cannot be the

167. *Bṛh. Up.* (IV. 3. 32).

168. *Taitt. Up.* (II. 7.)

meaning of such passages, because impersonal *Brahman* cannot be the source of joy. We have also noticed *Brahman* being regarded as father and mother, which is additional evidence that He is personal in character.

Brahman is not only the *bhūman*, but is also self-dependent. To the question raised by Nārada as to what forms the basis of the *bhūman* or by what is *bhūman* supported or in what it is established, Sanatkumāra replies that *bhūman* is established in its own glory.¹⁶⁹ This is another characteristic feature of *Brahman*, namely, His self-dependence or His being *causa sui*.

But since this statement, that *Brahman* is established in His own glories, might lead to the misconception of Its derivative nature, His existence being caused by His glories, another qualification is added. Sanatkumāra says that even the glories of God cannot be said to be His basis. *Brahman*, therefore, is not established in anything. Nothing forms His sustaining ground. But from this it does not follow that Sanatkumāra proposes to deprive *Brahman* of His glories. He merely re-affirms the ultimacy of *Brahman*, but does not deny His glories. Sudarśana Sūri rightly points out¹⁷⁰ that there is no denial of the glories of *Brahman*, but only a denial of *Brahman's* being established in the glory of His lordship over all things derived from and controlled by Him. Instead therefore, of *Brahman* Himself possessing a derivative nature, His existence or character being derived from His glories, He is rather Himself the source of the joy of others because He is good, loves all things and all living beings without any grudge and expresses Himself through them. Self-impartation or the gift of His own being is His very

169. स्वे महिम्नि प्रतिष्ठितः ।

Ch. Up., VII. 24. 1.)

170. Śrutaprasaṅga on Śrībhāṣya (I. 3. 7.)

nature. It is out of the abundance of His joy that joy is imparted to others. Hence, this passage describes the infinitude and self-dependence of God.

Brahman is also said to be all-pervading, but God's pervasion is not like the pervasion of the ether of space. It is not the pervasion of one material object by another material object. This has been made clear by another text, "All this is indeed *Brahman*".¹⁷¹ In this very *Upaniṣad* it is declared that it is by His will that He pervades all things. The account of *Brahman* that we find here assures us that the consummation of knowledge concerning Him is that one who knows Him no longer exists apart or separate from Him, but rather retains his own being, while remaining in close contact with Him. There is no suggestion of absorption but rather of penetration or communion. The knower of *Brahman* is penetrated by the Infinite. It is for this reason that Sanatkumāra says that God has to be contemplated as being one's own ego. It is evidently something like the cosmic consciousness of Jacob Boehme which is not the denial of the separate individuality of the knower of God, but rather his identification with the entire universe. R. L. Nettleship says: "True mysticism is the consciousness that everything which we experience is only an element in the fact, that, in being what it is, it is symbolic of more".¹⁷²

(b) NATURE OF MYSTIC FULFILMENT :

It is refreshing to note here that the *Chāndogya* gives an alluring and at the same time enchanting description of the highest mystical experience. It is said to be a state in which there is no longer even the slightest vestige of any form of dualism. The experience of the Infinite has been described by

171. Ch. Up. III. 14. 1. Vide p. 231, fn. 104.

172. Quoted in W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion*, p. 56.

Sanatkumāra in language which on a superficial view seems to be obliterative of all plurality and difference. The intensity of the enjoyment of communion with God has been so emphatically described that it is easy to mistake the passage containing this description as a monistic denial of all plurality and difference. The passage reads: "Where one does not see another, does not hear another, and does not know another, that one is the *bhūman*. Where one does see another, hear another, and know another, that is trivial." 173 This passage is one of the strongest supports in this *Upaṇiṣad* for the monistic character of the mystical experience in which there is total absorption of the subject in the object of his knowledge. Such an interpretation obviously altogether rules out any possibility of the duality of the subject-object relationship which is the pre-supposition of even the intensity of such an experience. The fact that an experience is felt to be very intense does not imply that it completely obliterates the difference between the subject which knows and the object which is known. Intimacy and intensity of experience is not the denial of the identity of the subject. There are many other experiences like those of the enjoyment of beauty or of rapture in music, in which infinite delight which is the truth of experience results in self-forgetfulness. Nevertheless, only when there is a self can there be an experience of self-forgetfulness. But self-forgetfulness is not the same as the extinction of the self. There must be a self even for experiencing self-forgetfulness.

The above passage, therefore, must not be supposed to be obliterative of the subject-object relationship that holds good between *Brahman* and the mystic subject who experiences Him. The only alternative to the complete obliteration of the subject-object relationship in this state of

173, Ch. Up. VII, 24, 1.

knowledge is a kind of subjectivism in which the self knows nothing but itself. But the self cannot be its own object of knowledge even according to the monistic interpretation. Hence, if this passage is taken to be a description of the most intense state of experience of the mystic, it can be interpreted in no other way than as involving the duality, though not the dualism, of God and the individual self

There are similar experiences described in other scriptures of the world. For instance, there is the well-known assertion of St. Paul namely, "I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me".¹⁷⁴ The clear suggestion of a passage like this is that the two wills, the will of God and the will of man, are so united as to be felt to be one. The religious subject also considers himself to be only the channel through which the Divine Light pours. In the initial stages of the mystic experience, it is he who possesses God, but in the final consummation of the same, God comes to possess him. As Guyon says: "The union with God is not thought of in the form of a literal identity, but only as a conformity and resemblance of wills ... The Sufi mystic, Al Ghazzali, speaks of identity only in the sense of being 'engrossed in your beloved', separate existence being only forgotten. Those who go beyond this 'are foolish babblers'; indeed to speak of being amalgamated with God is sin."¹⁷⁵

Another Western writer, J. B. Pratt, points out: "It is an immense but insensible joy, due to the fact that one fears nothing, desires nothing, wishes nothing. One is not thinking about it nor saying, 'How ecstatic I am!', because one is not thinking of oneself at all!"¹⁷⁶

That this *Chândogya* passage aims at teaching the ultimate extinction of the separate identity of the individual is thus a

174. *Epistle to the Galatians*, II. 20.

175. *The Elusive Mind*, p. 311.

176. *The Religious Consciousness*, p. 437.

completely incredible proposition. The individual or the *Ātman*, as a result of his final fulfilment, is able to extend the horizon of his knowledge, so that he is not only most intensely conscious of his own self or his existence, but even knows many things other than either his communion with God or his separate identity. Thus, the passage teaches that one who knows the *bhūman* (the Infinite) also knows it to be the origin and source of the entire world. There is, in this passage, no trace either of the total absorption of the individual in the Absolute or of the blotting out of the awareness of his own existence. While the intensity of the experience engrosses his personality, he is not absolutely unaware of it. The duality of what is called the subject-object relationship is already there. Hence the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* must be taken to be a testimony to that type of mystical experience in which the individual enjoys communion with God. Salvation indeed cannot be said to culminate in the absolute extinction of the existence of the individual, for in that case there would no longer be any individual left for the attainment of salvation.

(c) THE DIFFERENCE OF GOD AND MAN :

It would be appropriate at this stage of our study to take up the problem of the relation between the individual self and God. The obstacle to the theistic view of the difference between the finite individual and God, is doubtless the attribution of one and the same characteristic feature to both the individual self and the Supreme Self in the dialogue between Prajāpati and Indra on the one hand and in what is designated *Dātara Vidyā* on the other. But the difficulty is only on the surface, for one cannot miss the distinctive attributes of the Deity which contrast it with the individual self. The community of certain features possessed by both the Supreme Self and the individual self is no obstacle to our apprehension of the difference between them, because this is only a consequence of both of them being spiritual in nature. Hence both are sinless (*apahatapāpmā*),

unaging (*vijara*), deathless (*vimṛtyu*), sorrowless (*viśoka*), free from hunger (*vijighatsa*), self-satisfied (*satya-kāma*) and self-fulfilling (*satya-saṅkalpa*).

But Prajāpati is careful to distinguish the individual self from God. It is clearly asserted that when the *ātman*, designated as *samprasāda*, having abandoned the body, attains to the Supreme Light, i.e., *Brahman*, he has his true nature fully revealed to him with all its characteristic features. Then he becomes a completely transformed individual: he moves about there eating, playing and enjoying.¹⁷⁷ The supreme fulfilment of the individual is consequent upon the attainment of the Supreme Lord. All the hindrances of ignorance and evils, passions and emotions which obscure his true nature, having been completely obliterated, he attains to his genuine intrinsic selfhood. The passage distinguishes between *Brahman* and the finite individual by making it clear that it is not by his own efforts that the individual becomes free, but rather through his cognition of *Brahman* and the enjoyment of communion with Him.

Thus, the purpose of the dialogue between Indra and Prajāpati is to emphasise the real nature of the self; but that of *Dakṣa-Vidyā* is unquestionably the delineation of the distinctive features of the Supreme Self. But even in the dialogue between Prajāpati and Indra, the difference between the individual self and God is emphatically stated, because it is as a result of its communion with God that it becomes free. *Dakṣa-vidyā* is specifically concerned with the delineation of the features of God. Thus, it attributes creative powers to God which can by no means belong to man. Further, only God can be supposed to be seated in the heart of man.

When the individual self attains to the supreme height of spiritual perfection and comes to a realisation of its own nature and has its essential character fully revealed, it shares many of

177. जहन् क्रीडन् रममाणः । Ch. Up. VIII. 12.3.

the perfections of *Brahman*, but still remains distinct from Him. We are prone to miss the point that this passage distinguishes between two distinctive states of the individual self, one in which he is subject to many imperfections like subjection to *karma*, and the other, when by coming into contact with the Supreme Light, he has his true nature revealed and comes to possess many perfections of *Brahman*.

This is the object of the dialogue of Prajāpati and Indra to express and emphasise, but in *Dahara-vidyā* God is not stated to have suffered, like the individual self, from a prior obscuration of His own nature and as having many perfections and attributes unmanifest. His true nature is always manifest, as possessing all perfections intrinsically. Secondly, such unique attributes of *Brahman* as that He is the bridge to all things (*setutva*), that He maintains and sustains the entire universe (*sarvaloka-vidharatva*), and that He is the inner controller of all the animate and inanimate beings, show that He is different from the individual self, because the latter cannot possess these even when he attains to the height of his supreme perfection. Thirdly, the *jīva* described by Prajāpati has been asserted to be essentially finite.¹⁷⁸

Hence the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, when we consider all the different passages bearing upon the nature of the individual self and *Brahman*, the relation between the two, and, above all, His immanence in all things in Nature and history, gives its settled verdict in favour of the difference between God and man. It does not, therefore, seem to lend any support to *advaita* dogma of the identity of the individual self with God and the doctrine of impersonal and attributeless *Brahman*.

(d) "TATTVAMASI"

It is in such a context as this that it seems most appropriate to discuss at some length the meaning of the great text, "That

178. Ch. Up. VII. 10. 2.

thou art".¹⁷⁹ The *advaita* method of the interpretation of the scriptural texts is marked by a partisan attitude. Monists can conveniently say either that the texts of the scriptures have to be interpreted metaphorically when their literal meaning contradicts their view. Or they can construe them literally if they seem to endorse the *advaita* doctrines on a surface view of them. The great text, "That art thou", has been repeated nine times in the *Chândogya Upaniṣad*. It is therefore acknowledged by *Advaita* to establish the identity of the individual with God. We have already tried to establish by the analysis of many texts and of the contexts in which they occur, what the real import of this *Upaniṣad* can be held to be. This text cannot be interpreted in complete isolation from the contexts where it occurs. Thus, there is the passage, "That which is the finest essence—this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. That is *Ātman*. That art thou, Svetaketu".¹⁸⁰ It unmistakably teaches the identity doctrine, according to *Advaita*. But this text has to be understood against the background of *Saṃvidyā* of which it forms a part.

The *Upaniṣad* states that all things have their root in the *Sat* or Being which unmistakably points to *Brahman*. Hence, if this text, namely, 'that all this is *Ātman*', means that 'all this is pervaded by *Ātman*', it cannot certainly be taken to assert the identity of *Brahman* with Nature and history, but rather to lay emphasis on the fact that Nature and history are pervaded by the *Ātman*, that the *Ātman* is the soul of all things and that all things are His body.

Then it is said that 'that is true'. This follows close upon the previous text, from which it can be legitimately inferred that the purport of this second text is that the world is real for the

179. तत्त्वमसि । *Ch. Up.* V. 18 7.

180. ऐतदात्म्यमिदं सर्वं तत्सत्यं स मात्मा तत्त्वमसि श्वेतकेतो ।
Ch. Up., VI. 14. 3.)

sole reason that *Brahman* is its soul and that He is immanent in it. The reality of the world is derived from this immanence, so that, apart from its relation to Him, the world cannot be taken to be real. Finally, when it is said, "That is the *Ātman*," such a statement can be construed as saying that the *Sat* or Being or the Supreme Reality who created this world and even entered it to make it real and concrete, is different from that which It enters and makes Its abode.

Thus, the immanence of *Brahman* is emphasised from two points of view, namely, from the point of view of the relation of the world to Him, which means that it cannot exist apart from Him, and from the standpoint of *Brahman* which lays stress on the fact that He does not create the world and leave it to itself, but is the very soul and substance of it; He is immanent in it and constantly takes care of it. This view is the antipodes of the Cartesian banishment of God from the world in the seventeenth century. And then, by way of a conclusion drawn from the above statements, it is said that the individual is identical with *Brahman*, '*That thou art (tattvamasi).*'

In interpreting this text, we must take into account the premises from which the conclusion is drawn. If the context in which this statement occurs and the foregoing premises from which this conclusion is drawn, are both taken into account, the conventional monistic interpretation, asserting the numerical identity of the individual with God, will lead us into sore straits. The characteristic features of God, the most important of which is His immanence in Nature and history, are not cast aside, but rather receive repeated emphasis.

The text only seems to suggest that that Soul (*sa ātma*), the Lord, the *Ādesa*, the *Sat*, the Supreme Reality who has brought everything into existence and entered into it as its own soul in order to make it real, is the same as the individual self. On the surface, it seems to vote in favour of identity. But the context accentuates God's immanence, and from that point of view, it

certainly seems to be the intention of the text to declare that *Brahman*, immanent in the world, is the same as *Brahman* immanent in the individual self. The Supreme Reality, the *Sat*, the One without a second, *Brahman*, who before this world came into existence, existed in an unmanifest form, is the same *Brahman* immanent in the world after it has come into existence. The implication is that *Brahman* has created the world. The text attributes so many powers and exalted glories to God. It cannot, therefore, mean the ontological identity of God with man. Even the exponents of *Advaita Vedānta* certainly start with their *prima facie* acceptance of this apparent difference of God from the individual self. What the *advaita* interpretation is accustomed to deny or pass over in silence for deciphering the exact meaning of this text, is the prior statement as to the entrance of the Supreme Self into the individual self, the implication being that the latter is sustained in its existence because of the fact that the former chooses to dwell in it. Neither the context nor the text in question supports the monistic view. Hence this text makes an explicit reference to the immanence of *Brahman* in all things and not to Its identity with them. It is a text having in view the description first and foremost of God and not of the individual self, because its object in its very starting point seems to be the delineation of the unique features of God, namely, that He is one without a second, *ekamevādvytīyam*, that He is *sat* and that He desired to multiply Himself. The conception, therefore, of the Deity as the self-determining Reality seems undoubtedly to have been established in this text.

Therefore, the term '*tvam*' has no importance in itself. The meaning of '*tvam*', 'thou', can, hence, be taken only to be subsidiary or secondary to that of *tat* or 'that' of God. It follows that *Brahman* in the manifest form as abiding within the human self and as immanent in the course of Nature, is the same *Brahman* that existed before both Nature and history passed as a result of God's will from the anterior unmanifest to the posterior manifest form. Hence, it seems that the conventional *advaita*

interpretation which has been brought in to conclude that God and man have reference to the same ontological principle, is quite unwarranted. But this identity can be arbitrarily established, only if we leave out of account and brush aside all the distinctive characteristics of God which the context unmistakably brings home to our minds.

We find another mistake in the *advaita* interpretation of the text. It appears not only to reduce God to an impersonal principle by depriving Him of all His characteristic attributes and powers, but also to rob the individual self of its individuality by denuding it of all its individual properties. The correct procedure of interpretation depends upon taking into account the whole context pertaining to the meaning of the premises from which this conclusion has been drawn. This interpretation may sound quite startling to the reader, because of the radical departure it makes from the conventional *advaita* interpretation of it. But truth must not be identified with convention, and Rāmaṇuja has tried to show that the correct interpretation of any text of the scripture depends upon taking it as a part of the context in which it occurs and not on grafting on it a literal or a metaphorical meaning according to one's prejudices and preconceptions. Whether the meaning suggested is literal or metaphorical, it is the context that decides. It is not proper to change one's sides just for the sake of foisting one's own opinion on the text of the scripture.

The analytical and interpretative study of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* briefly outlined above corroborates all such doctrines as form the foundation stone of the theistic view of existence as emphasized and taught by Rāmaṇuja. Rāmaṇuja did not, like Saṅkara, the exponent of *advaita* philosophy, write commentaries on all the important *Upaniṣads*: but in support of his view he has quoted passages from them all in the course of his commentary on the *sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa. Moreover, in his *Vedārthasaṅgraha* which, as the title indicates, is a compendium of the meaning of the *Vedas*, he has taken into account all such

crucial texts of the *Upaniṣads* as have a bearing upon the nature of the Deity, the nature of the world, man's place in the world, his relation to God and the manner of the attainment of his final destiny. He has affirmed his fidelity and loyalty to all such passages without discriminating among them from the point of view of the higher transcendental and the lower empirical truth after the fashion of Śaṅkarācārya and his followers. Both teachers claim fidelity to revelation, but they arrive at diametrically opposite conclusions. Śaṅkara makes a clear-cut distinction between *Brahman* and *Īvara*, the Absolute of philosophical contemplation, and God, the object of religious worship and devotion.

Religion in *Advaita Vedānta*, in the sense of the consciousness of God, is certainly not the highest truth, because it belongs to the sphere of ignorance or *avidyā*; and again, God the phenomenal appearance of the Absolute, must disappear ultimately into it as soon as spiritual enlightenment is attained. This spiritual enlightenment is nothing more than such knowledge of *Brahman* that the individual or the *jīva* also, after discarding his separate identity, is lost in *Brahman* together with the physical world. The drastic consequence is that the attainment of knowledge which is the final destiny of man, ends in a complete absorption or evaporation of all things in *Brahman*. Such an interpretation of *Vedānta* is not now accepted by serious and impartial students of the *Upaniṣads*. That *Brahman* is all-inclusive in nature and that, therefore, plurality and difference are not incompatible with the reality of *Brahman*, is the clear, unquestionable declaration of many passages of the *Upaniṣads*. In interpreting the *Upaniṣads*, Radhakrishnan has no doubt adopted the Hegelian method, according to which the Infinite which excludes the finite is a spurious infinite. But this interpretation is not distorted or far-fetched; it is warranted by the spirit of the *Upaniṣads* themselves. Their interpretation through the Hegelian eye is a definite advantage, as it alone can dispel many of the misconceptions that have stood in the way of

appreciating their spirit. In fact, Śaṅkara's interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* has on it the indelible stamp of Buddhist thought. His anxiety to be loyal to the two opposite traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, Radhakrishnan concedes, is responsible for the contradictions affecting the rigour of his thinking.¹⁸¹ In the same context, he has also said exactly as Rāmānuja does that "if the finite is unreal, the absolute becomes something in which all is lost and nothing is found again. If change and multiplicity are regarded as unreal, then even permanence becomes reduced to an unreality."¹⁸²

VII. The *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*

(a) THE RELATION OF 'Brahman' TO THE WORLD :

The *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* is definitely the oldest *Upaniṣad*. It is also the largest in volume and presents an undying record of the profound and deep interest kings and sages took in spiritual matters. It is important also from the point of view of the growth of philosophical and religious opinions, as one can discern in it the views of eminent thinkers at that time.

The widely prevalent view concerning its philosophical outlook is that it upholds what has been called the pure idealism of Yājñavalkya. The distinct contribution that this *Upaniṣad* has made to Indian thought is decidedly its insistence on the reference of all things to the *ātman*. The self is the highest value and all things forsake him who forsakes his own self. This pure idealism of Yājñavalkya, however, cannot be interpreted as pointing to nothing beyond the philosophy of the finite individual. It would be a gross error to think that the idealism of Yājñavalkya is acosmic. Nor could it be said that Yājñavalkya was not aware of a higher dimension of reality than that of the finite individual.

181. See fn. 184 on p. 288 *supra*.

182. *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 74.

The reality of the world is rooted in *Brahman*. The world does not therefore stand by itself. This is the common contention of all the *Upaniṣads*. There is nowhere any reference in any of them to the exclusion of the phenomenal world by the infinite, the all-pervasive *Brahman*. There is no such radical opposition between the eternal and the temporal as came to be emphasised in Buddhism and *Advaita Vedānta*. The *Upaniṣads* seem only to warn us against the self-sufficiency of the world.

In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* so many similes and symbols have been given to explain the relation between the temporal order and the timeless reality that is *Brahman*. In them, the conch-shell, the drum and the lute are for example employed to suggest that it is the ultimate reality that reveals itself in the phenomena of the world. The sounds emanating from the conch-shell, the drum and the lute are the expression and revelation of them rather than their falsification and distortion. The frequency of 'as it were' in such contexts as these, is wrongly interpreted to support the falsity of the world. The context in which this phrase occurs teaches, however, not that the *nāma-rūpa* or the phenomena or events of the world and the experience of plurality and difference are false, but only that they coalesce in the unity of Being and that they cannot claim self-sufficiency. How can Yājñavalkya teach the pure idealism attributed to him, if he keeps on reminding us that from God sprang forth, as sparks from the fire, all the vital spirits, all the gods, all living creatures, that in Him they are all fixed, like spokes in the nave of a wheel?

Reference of all things and all values to the Self or the *Ātman* is no denial of their reality. To direct empirical consciousness and the realistic attitude to the fundamental truth of identity and oneness does not amount to the denial of the phenomenal world. It is only the suggestion of a higher order of being in which they all exist, from which it follows that, in separation from them, no meaning can be attached to their

reality and existence. The persistent and frequent reminder that the world is comprised in the Infinite is an emphatic indication both of the manifestation of *Brahman* in the order of space and time and in the facts and events of the spatio-temporal order and of the repudiation of their self-sufficiency. This inevitably bears on both the revelation of God and the reality of what makes such revelation possible. The relation between God and the world and the facts and events within it can have no meaning, if emphasis is made to fall on only one side of the relation. This insight of looking upon the world from the standpoint of God in whom it is rooted and on *Brahman* as revealed in it becomes clearer, the more one concentrates on His nature to which the *Upaniṣad* harks back again and again in more than one place. The self-revealing and self-manifesting nature of *Brahman* is incompatible with the thesis of pure idealism ascribed to Yājñavalkya.

A few words may be added on the problem of the relation of *Brahman* to the world as stated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. The monistic interpretation has concentrated attention on phrases and words like "as if there was a duality" and "as if one perceived duality where there is no duality at all". These may seem to suggest that the world is false and that its appearances are imaginary. But what these phrases mean can be truly grasped only when we take note of the contexts in which they appear and many other statements which contradict them. This much, of course, may be admitted that in all the *Upaniṣads*, including even the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, not only are the many declared to come from the One and the One is said to multiply itself into the many, but the many are also traced back to the One. It does not follow from the intimate relation between the One and the many as indicated in such passages that because the One is real, the many are false. But the phrase, "as if there was a duality", has led to the misconception that the world is an appearance and is the product of *māyā*. A passage in which these phrases occur forms part of the

conclusion of the dialogue between Yājñavalkya and his wife, Maitreyī. Its plain meaning seems to be only the transcendence of the stage of duality and difference. There is a stage of duality and difference and there is another stage in which, in the intensity and depth of experience, duality and difference are transcended. This is the subject of the whole discourse. So long as there is a stage of duality, Yājñavalkya says, there is difference between the knower and the object known. But in the stage of oneness, the knower and the known become one. Therefore, the stage of oneness transcends the stage of duality. Difference and duality, therefore, cannot be the ultimate form of experience and of reality.

Yājñavalkya makes it clear to his wife that all things are dear because of the Self. Now, such a statement cannot be interpreted to mean that there is no difference or duality as such. Such a long discourse, taken along with the phrase "as it were", can only mean that although duality and difference exist, they are not felt or experienced as such. The monistic interpretation concentrates on the phrase "as it were", and emphasises the point that if Yājñavalkya had in his mind any the least intention not to deny the dignity of difference and duality, the phrase would not have been repeated by him. But this does not follow from the context. Duality and difference exist, although they are not experienced to be such. The experience is ineffable, and it is because of the ineffability of it that duality and difference seem to abandon their original form and are transmuted into oneness.

Yājñavalkya seems to use such phrases only to show that the dualistic conception is impermanent and transitory, but not for that reason illusory. The context makes it clear that he is making a distinction between values that are impermanent and values that are eternal. It is not his purpose to teach that just because all things are loved for the sake of the self, only the self is real and all other things are false. The attempt, therefore, to

find in this dialogue between Yājñavalkya and his wife any trace of the doctrine of the falsity of all things is incompatible with its underlying spirit. There are many other statements like the following: "In the *Ātman* as the knowing subject, space with all its content is interwoven" (III. 8 11; Cf IV. 4 17); "All the heavenly regions are its organs" (IV 2 4): "In Him they are fixed, like spokes in the nave of a wheel" (II 5. 15); "He is the reality of reality: from Him spring forth the fire, all the vital spirits, all worlds, all gods, all living creatures" (II. 1 20); "This (universe of names and forms and works), although it is threefold, is one, that is, the *Ātman*: ...He is immortal which is concealed by the empirical reality" (I 6. 3); "He oversteps in sleep this universe and the forms of death;only as it were doth another exist" (IV. 3. 7, 31); "He stands as the spectator alone without a second" (IV. 8. 23): and "There is no plurality" (IV. 4. 19).

All these statements do not seem to support the doctrine of the falsity of the world. The only interpretation that seems to be in consonance with the pervading spirit of such passages is that duality and difference are real only as the revelation and expression of unity and not that they are in themselves false. The *Upaniṣads* do not seem to deny duality and difference as such, but rather duality and difference when abstracted from unity. If Yājñavalkya meant all things to be false, except *Brahman*, why at all should he declare that all the heavenly regions are the organs of *Brahman*? Does not this sentence mean that all the heavens are rather the parts of *Brahman*—which suggests that *Brahman* cannot be real without His parts also being real? If a whole is intelligible in terms of its parts, can we take the whole to be real by declaring the parts to be false? It would certainly be ridiculous to maintain that the context in which such sentences occur, aims at declaring that all parts in terms of which we understand the nature of *Brahman*, are false. Does the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* contain any simile or example of false change? On the contrary, only such instances and

examples have been given as illustrate only the reality of change and prove thus the reality of both cause and effect. It would not be plausible to contend from such examples that while the cause alone is real, its effects are false. From the immanence of *Brahman* which is the burden of Yājñavalkya's teachings, it is only the reality of plurality and difference of all the names and forms in the universe that can be taken to be his settled conclusion.

(b) NATURE OF GOD:

The most striking and outstanding feature of *Brahman* repeatedly emphasised throughout the *Upaniṣad* is its self-multiplying character. *Brahman* is not a bald and abstract concept, but a living reality who is the object of our eternal quest because of Its being the source of our highest satisfaction and fulfilment. Man seeks joy in all his undertakings, but he miserably fails to attain it because the values of the world do not have that in them which can confer supreme felicity. All finite and earthly pleasures are compared to the pleasure and happiness derived from the bliss of God. There is a calculus of bliss similar to that set forth in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II 8):

“If one is fortunate among men and wealthy, lord over others, best provided with all human enjoyments, that is the highest bliss of man. Now a hundredfold the bliss of men is one bliss of those who have won the fathers' world. Now a hundredfold the bliss of those who have won the fathers' world is one bliss in the *Gandharva*-world. A hundredfold the bliss in the *Gandharva*-world is one bliss of the gods who gain their divinity by meritorious works. A hundredfold the bliss of the gods by works is one bliss of the gods by birth and of him who is learned in the *Vedas*, who is without crookedness, and who is free from desire. A hundredfold the bliss of the gods by birth is one bliss in the *Prajāpati*-world and of him who is learned in the *Vedas*, who is without crookedness, and who is free from desire. A hundredfold the bliss in the *Prajāpati*-world is one bliss in the *Brahman*-world and of him who is learned in the

Vedas, who is without crookedness, and who is free from desire. This truly is the highest world. This is the *Brahman*-world, O King. Thus spoke Yajñavalkya."183

The *Upaniṣad* does not identify *Brahman* with bliss, but describes Him as the owner of bliss. The description of the calculus of bliss, concurrent with the assertion that all earthly pleasures are but straw as compared with the bliss of *Brahman*, is a call to fix one's whole mind and heart and spirit on Him, because no other effort than that of the knowledge of Him can bring one into the state of highest fulfilment and happiness. Here is the teaching given to Gārgī:

"Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable, the sun and the moon stand apart. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable, the earth and the sky stand apart. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable the moments, the hours, the days, the nights, the fortnights, the months, the seasons, and the years stand apart. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable some rivers flow from the snowy mountains to the east, others to the west, in whatever direction each flows. Verily, O Gārgī, at the command of that Imperishable men praise those who give, the gods are desirous of a sacrificer, and the fathers (are desirous) of the Manes-sacrifice.

"Verily, O Gārgī, if one performs sacrifices and worship and undergoes austerity in this world for many thousands of years, but without knowing that Imperishable, limited indeed is that (work) of his. Verily, O Gārgī, he who departs from this world without knowing that Imperishable is pitiable. But, O Gārgī, he who departs from this world knowing that Imperishable is a *Brahmaṇa*."184

That the reference in this passage is to God and not to the individual soul is undisputed because it is to God that the

183. *Bṛih. Up.* IV. 3. 33,

184. *Ibid.*, III. 8. 9-10.

following statement applies: "This is a man's highest achievement. This is his highest bliss. On a part of just this bliss, other creatures have their living." God is the source of the pleasures of all living beings. It is the fragments of the infinite bliss of God that are manifested in the finite pleasures of all living beings.

The pleasure of the finite self is derived from the bliss of God. Finite pleasures are not in themselves the source of delight which can come only from God. The explicit assertion here of the difference of finite pleasures derived from the bliss or delight of God and of the fact that it is this supreme delight that sustains all finite beings of the world assumes their ontological difference.

Again: "Yajñavalkya said: Verily, I know that Person, the last source of every soul, of whom you speak. This very person who is in the body is He".¹⁸⁵

This description begins with the delineation of the nature of *Brahman* and ends with the assurance that one who knows Him attains stability and peace:

"*Brahma* is knowledge, is bliss,
The final goal of the giver of offerings,
Of him, too, who stands still and knows It."¹⁸⁶

The difference of the individual self from God is the inalienable constituent in the conception of God that the *Upaniṣad* presents to us. The empirical personality of the finite self with all its attendant consequences, its virtues and vices, marks it off from *Brahman*: "According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good. The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action".¹⁸⁷

185. *Bṛih. Up.* III. 9. 10; Hume *Thirteen Principles Upanishads*, p. 121.

186. *Ibid.* III. 9. 23; p. 126.

187. *Ibid.* IV. 4. 5; Hume, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 140.

But God is free and not subject to the operation of the inexorable law of *karma* upon Him: "Verily, he is the great, unborn Soul, who is this person consisting of knowledge among the senses. In the space within the heart lies the ruler of all, the lord of all, the king of all. He does not become greater by good action, nor inferior by bad action. He is the lord of all, the overlord of beings, the protector of beings. He is the separating dam for keeping these worlds apart".¹⁸⁸

It is of God, thus distinguished from the finite self and everything else, that this text adds He is the object of the spiritual quest of man: "The Brāhmanas desire to know Him by the words of the *Vedas*, by worship, charity and austerity. Knowing Him, one becomes a sage. The recluses, desiring Him as the place to live in, renounce the world. On this account the wise men of old did not desire progeny, saying to themselves, 'What shall we do with progeny, when we have got this Being, this world to live in?' And thus they gave up desire for sons, wealth and the world and lived the life of mendicants".¹⁸⁹

This text make a clear distinction between two souls, one that is the great unborn soul indicated by the two personal pronouns 'He' (*sa*) and 'this' (*esa*), evidently because of His difference from the finite self and His immanence in it, and the finite self itself who abides within the vital spirits.¹⁹⁰ The text makes use of two different pronouns for both God and the finite

188. *Ibid.* IV. 4. 22; p. 140.

189. *Ibid.* Quoted in Bhandarkar, *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, p. 39.

190.

स वा एष महानज्ज आत्मा योऽयं विज्ञानमयः प्राणेषु य एषोऽन्तर्हृदय
आकाशस्तस्मिन्नेते सबस्य वशी सर्वस्येशानः सर्वस्याधिपतिः स साधुना
कर्माणा भूयान्नो एवासाधुना कनीयानेय सर्वेश्वर एष भूताधिपतिरेय
भूतपाल एष सेतुर्बिघरण एषां लोकानामसंसेदाय ।

self. The pronouns 'He' and 'this' signify *Brahman* who is stated to repose within the inner cavity of the individual self. The individual soul is taken to abide within the vital spirits. The inner cavity of the heart belongs to the individual soul and it is in the individual soul that God abides. The text teaches that God is the inner ruler of the individual soul. There are many other characteristics of God which emphasise His difference from the finite soul. Thus it is said that He is the ruler of all because all obey His commands. It is in virtue of the sun and the moon obeying His commands that they are sustained by Him in their existence. God sustains all things in their existence, because He rules over them all. He is their Lord, because He exercises His control over them. He is their overlord or king also because He is the final purpose or goal of them all. All things have value only in so far as they serve His purpose and carry out His will. Since all these functions are exercised by the soul, God has been declared to be the inner soul of the individual soul.

There are as many as twenty-two paragraphs in which the characteristic features of *Brahman* as the inner soul of all things, including even the individual soul, His transcendence to them in spite of His immanence and the exercise of His controlling power from within them all, are categorically and clearly described.¹⁹¹ Even Śaṅkara endorses the authority of the *Mādhyandina* recension in which the text stating the immanence of God in the individual soul occurs.¹⁹² The context in which these texts occur starts with the affirmation of the existence of *Brahman* at the beginning of the world. That this is a description of God is obvious from the fact that it appears in a context in which the question of the number of gods is raised to

191. *Bṛh. Up.* III. 7.

192. व ज्ञात्मनि तिष्ठसिद्धिः नान्यत्रैतद्वैतः ।

Śaṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya*, I, 2. 20.

which the final answer given by Yajñavalkya is that there is only one God. He returns over and over again to the description of the power and glory of God, in contrast to the importance of the individual soul. Many other passages following close upon these texts tell us that God is the supreme object of all our spiritual endeavours, of all our knowledge, wisdom and learning, and that it is with the object of attaining Him that one abandons the desire for sons, for wealth and even for the whole world. Such statements do not lend countenance to the monistic interpretation, where these differences refer to the two contrasted states of actual imperfection and the ideal perfection of one and the same individual soul. Towards the end of the fourth *brāhmaṇa* of the fourth chapter, which treats of the nature of the Deity, the *Upaniṣad* intimates that it is by having this knowledge, and having become calm, subdued, quiet, patiently enduring and collected, that one intuits the Soul within one's own soul.¹⁹³

It is not a forlorn and impoverished view of God that the *Upaniṣad* presents. One is disappointed, if one looks in such passages for the conception of impersonal Absolute. The *Ātman*, existent at the beginning of the world, is conceived to be personal and is stated to have desires very much similar to human desires and emotions. The self-manifesting and self-revealing character of *Brahman* is expressed in the following passage: "He was afraid. Therefore one who is alone is afraid. This one then thought to himself: 'Since there is nothing else than myself, of what am I afraid?' Thereupon, verily, his fear departed, for of what should he have been afraid? Assuredly, it is from a second that fear arises. Verily, he had no delight. Therefore one alone has no delight. He desired a second. He was, indeed, as large as a woman and a

193. तस्मादेवंविच्छान्तो दान्तोपरतस्तिष्ठुः समाहितो भूत्वाऽत्मन्ये-
वात्मानं पश्यति । *Bṛh. Up. IV. 4. 23.*

man closely embraced. He caused that self to fall (*pat*) into two pieces. Therefrom arose a husband (*pati*) and a wife (*patni*). Therefore this is true: 'Oneself (*sva*) is like a half-fragment', as Yājñavalkya used to say." 194

(c) MYSTIC EXPERIENCE :

The clue to the nature of mystic experience is to be found in the simile of sexual enjoyment with one's wife which unmistakably points to communion and not union of the individual with God. Prof. H. D. Lewis makes the observation that such descriptions cannot be interpreted literally and that it is far from their intention to annul the duality of the subject and the object: "Religious thinkers and others reporting their religious experience very often tell us, in describing their sense of the nearness of God and the closeness of their fellowship with Him, of an immediate or intuitive knowledge of God. But it is never very certain when these terms are to be taken strictly. For it would be possible for an awareness of God to be very intense, to banish all else from our thought, to overwhelm us with the sense of His presence and to rid us of all thought of ourselves, so that we have little sense of our separate identity, and yet, as seems to me inevitable, not be in the strict sense immediate or direct. It would not be out of place to use these terms, for no terms other than these or their equivalents will suit the peculiar intensity of the experience and the sense of certainty which it involves. But we have none the less to remember their equivocal nature." 195

The social nature of the Deity is explicitly made out in the statement that *Brahman* was stricken with the fear of loneliness which is the cause of fear. Absorption, fusion or merger of the individual soul in God which seems to be the apparent meaning

194. *Bṛh. Up.* I. 4. 2-3; translation by Hume.

195. *Morals and Revelation*, pp. 180-87.

of many passages in the *Upaniṣad*, conflicts with the social nature of the Deity. One cannot in the same breath emphasise that loneliness was boredom to the Deity and also deny the existence of anything other than *Brahman*. The similes of the lute, the conch-shell and the drum rule out of court the negation of the phenomenal existence. Further, the description of the mystic experience does not so much evacuate the finite self of its concrete and varied perceptions as teach that they cannot have their existence separate from the self. The existence and reality of the finite self is affirmed only as revealed in its concrete and varied perceptions and experiences.

Mysticism in the genuine sense of the term is stimulated by the ethical ideal of perfection which is accomplished in the experience of identity with all that exists. Finding of one's self in the self of others is not the denial of the reality of them, but rather a more emphatic assertion of their value, because it is only by expanding one's narrow horizons that one can, in moral and spiritual life, experience the height of ethical perfection that is the animating inspiration and ultimate goal of all religious endeavour.

These findings as to the nature of the mystic experience described in the *Upaniṣad* are reinforced, when we focus attention upon many texts which describe the finite self as the owner of consciousness manifested in its varied experiences. The *Upaniṣad* teaches that since the *ātman* is basically and intrinsically a knower, it does not necessarily depend on its instruments and organs for the expression of its cognitive powers. It is not pure consciousness stripped of all its cognitive manifestations, but rather self-consciousness possessing them as the real manifestation of its powers and possibilities to which Yājñavalkya recurs with repetitious frequency. The commonplace opinion that Yājñavalkya's treatment of the nature of the *ātman* amounts to the vindication of an impersonal and abstract view of existence, depriving both God and the finite individual of personality, is manifestly incompatible with the whole course of the *Upaniṣad*.

(d) 'Brahman' AS PERSONAL ETHICAL WILL ;

Not only is *Brahman* the first cause of the universe, but He has also been acknowledged to be the moral ruler of the universe, one who is the Lord of all things and in whose control all things exist. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* declares that It is the sovereign will of *Brahman* that sustains the sun and the moon, and it is His power that also maintains in existence the heaven and the world. In many paragraphs, it has dealt with the supreme power of *Brahman*, who by His will maintains and sustains in existence all things, the rivers, mountains, the directions and so forth. The entire universe has been described as existing not independently of *Brahman*, but as maintained and sustained by His supreme will and power.¹⁹⁶

After a long account of the function of God's power and will Yājñavalkya tells Gārgi that it is only by the knowledge of this indestructible *Brahman* that the highest goal of human existence is realized and that whoever, not having known Him, departs from this world, is wretched indeed. One may offer oblations and perform sacrifices in this world, but if one fails to know this indestructible *Brahman*, he is destined to enjoy only the transient rewards of his virtues and is never able to attain the highest end of his life.¹⁹⁷

Such passages, dwelling upon the maintenance and sustenance of the universe and all things in it, do not ascribe cosmic powers to the finite self of man. The widespread view that the *Upaniṣads* speak about the individual self and its transcendental perfection symbolised by the term 'God', is flagrantly in contrast to such plain and categorical statements. They are not silent on the concrete nature of the Deity. *Brahman* or Ultimate Reality has been declared to be a person (*puruṣavidha*), that is,

196. *Bṛh. Up.* III, 8. 9.

197. *Ibid.* III, 8. 10.

having both intelligence and will as the features of His consciousness.

The difference between *Brahman* and the individual self was a familiar idea to the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*.¹⁹⁸ The very question raised in the *Upaniṣads* as to who is *Brahman* and who is it that is our self, makes it clear that these two principles were definitely treated as different from each other.¹⁹⁹ Plurality and difference are not regarded as real in their own right, because such a secular point of view cannot enable us to obtain conquest over evils and, therefore, that which is ultimate reality must be one and incomprehensible. The Lord or *Brahman* cannot be far away from the finite individual, but abides in his heart as it were, which is His seat or abode. He is the ruler of all things, Lord of all and, unlike the finite individual, is not affected by good or bad actions.²⁰⁰ Such statements leave no room for the validity of the commonplace view that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, or for the matter of that, the early *Upaniṣads*, are predominantly monistic in their orientation.

It is extremely surprising that, in spite of very clear assertions with repetitious frequency of one and the same theme in all the *Upaniṣads*, they are supposed by eminent scholars not to support one single coherent doctrine. The frequency of certain statements and assertions in all them of laying stress on one and the same theme, is a fact to be reckoned with. Of not less importance is the fact that they nowhere treat *Brahman* as a principle of mere abstract intelligence or abstract identity with no power of self-limitation. The conventional interpretation of their teachings on monistic lines certainly bristles with many

198. *Śat. Br.* X. 6. 1.

199. को न आत्मा, किं ब्रह्म *Ch. Up.* V. 11. 1.

200. *Bṛh. Up.* IV. 4. 23.

discrepancies that press themselves on our minds when we come upon passages that constitute one common theme in all of them.

That there is a Supreme Universal Mind with knowledge and will constituting its essence, who, and though distinct from Nature and history, is immanent in them and controls them from within, is the contention of as many as twenty-two long paragraphs.

The transcendence of God has been emphasised by pointing out that all things are comprised in and sustained by Him. "As all the spokes of the wheel of a chariot are included in its felly and hub, so also in this *Ātman* are comprised all the beings, all the gods, all the worlds, all *prāṇas*. All these souls are included in the *Ātman*."²⁰¹ That the whole discourse unmistakably relates to the Supreme Mind and not to the individual soul is patent from the fact that it has been advanced in answer to the question whether there is any principle which can be acknowledged to be the inner controller and ruler of all things, either in this world or in the world hereafter. The question is put to Kṛpā if he knows that inner controller or ruler (*tamantaryāyanaṁ*) who controls this as well as the other world and all the beings from within.²⁰² It is doubtless an inquiry into God conceived to be different from both the world and man.

The ambiguity with respect to the nature of the Deity and its difference from the finite self springs from the fact that the

201.

रथबाहौ च रथनेमौ चाराः सर्वे समर्पिता एवमेवास्मिन्नात्मनि
सर्वाणि भूतानि सर्वे देवाः लोकाः सर्वे प्राणाः सर्व एव आत्मानः
समर्पिताः । *Bṛh. Up.* II. 8. 18.

202.

वेत्थ तु त्वं काप्य तमन्तर्यामिणं य इमं च लोकं परं च लोक
सर्वाणि च भूतानि योऽन्तरो यमयति । *Ib. id.* III. 7. 1.

descriptions of the nature and power of both of them are set forth side by side. The *Upaniṣads* are not quite systematic and logical in describing the experiences of the seers, so that we could extract from them a logically articulate and systematic body of propositions concerning God and religion. None the less, the drift of their teachings can be discerned. That they distinguish God and the world on the one hand and God and man on the other, in terms of His immanence and transcendence, is unquestionably their common teaching.

References in the early *Upaniṣads*, therefore, that constitute the basis of the religious view of reality and existence are so unmistakable that the attempt to assimilate them to abstract monism seems to amount to distortion of their teachings. Monism and theism in Indian thought and culture need not be supposed to be airtight and radically opposite systems of belief, in so far as both imperceptibly fuse into each other. We must exercise the utmost caution in regard to the multiplicity and diversity of texts and also of the different contexts in which they are presented.

VIII. Theism in the Later ‘*Upaniṣads*’

In the later *Upaniṣads*, the same view of reality and existence has been elaborated. There is not such a radical difference between the early and later *Upaniṣads*, as to justify the view that while in the former monism is taught, the latter which are said to signalize a degeneration in speculative thinking, are concerned with personal God, the reality of the world, the difference between God and man and the freedom and independence of the finite individual. The fact that many of the passages Rāmaṇuja has quoted from such *Upaniṣads* as the *Kaṭha*, *Mundaka*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Subāla*, *Mahānārāyaṇa* and so on, must not make us slip into the error of thinking that the doctrine of personal God has been adumbrated only in them and that it is the outcome of an after-thought or at best a concession to

popular consciousness. Rāmaṇuja has cited references even from the early *Upaniṣads* like *Chāndogya*, *Aitareya*, *Taittiriya* etc., which shows that, with due regard to the integrity of the texts, how one doctrine, one creed has been quite unambiguously propounded in all the scriptures. Reverence for and loyalty to the authority of scripture demands that we must regard all texts as standing on the same footing and as commanding the same authority. Thus, later *Upaniṣads* are elaborations of the vague suggestions of the earlier ones. Professor Hiriyanna maintains 'that transformation of the impersonal *Brahman* or the Absolute into a personal God' was already in progress even in the older *Upaniṣads*.²⁰³

The *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* fall in one continuous line of the development of Indian thought and the view widely held that there has been an abrupt and unexpected change, a revolution, as it were, in the growth of the religious ideas, is not true, if we take into account the evolution of philosophical and religious thought elsewhere. Thought always develops from the concrete to the abstract and not from the abstract to the concrete. It is from the language of myths and history that thought makes transition to abstraction. The intellectual constitution of the human mind is itself such that, in the first instance, it cannot but think in terms of concrete images and symbols of the powers and forces which are not accessible to the senses. It is only much later that abstract concepts and general ideas come into play.

In the *Vedas*, we come across a point of view in which the forces of Nature are idealised, humanized and brought into intimate and friendly relationship with men. It is not true that the Āryan mind at that time had no inkling of the Supreme, Ultimate, Conscious Mind behind the forces of Nature because, side by side with the prayers addressed to the

203. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 86.

deities, we meet with the unshakable faith of the Vedic *pit* in the reality of one supreme power working behind all things. There are clear indications of the many deities being looked upon as the manifestations and expressions of one supreme God. Polytheism is incipient monism. Dr. H.D. Lewis writes: "We also know enough today of some of the extraordinary ways in which our minds do work on occasion, even at our stage of intellectual development, to find it not beyond comprehension that, just as early thinkers seem to have believed in a *co-existence of opposites* (italics mine), so it was possible for a colourful polytheistic religion to have also a distinctively monistic aspect. The conclusion to which this points is, in my opinion, that we should not regard monotheism as a completely new departure in religion, but as the bringing into consciousness, not always in the most adequate forms, of what has been latent from the start. How far this new understanding was the achievement of particular peoples, how and when they communicated it to others, are matters outside the scope of this inquiry. It will suffice for us to note the presence, prior to any intellectual monism, of intimations of an underlying unity of religious experience in the form of some sense of one supreme reality animating various forms of worship *not overtly or consistently monistic* (italics mine). If this could be true at the level at which we hear of gods like Varuṇa or *Brahman*, may it not also present us with the true way of regarding polytheism and animism in yet similar and less reflective forms? I venture to think that it is along lines like these that we should tackle the problems of the history and comparative study of early religions, being careful not to be misled by too sharp an antithesis of polytheism and monism or the expectation that the monistic alternative to polytheism should always have the form of the monotheism with which we are acquainted ourselves".²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴. H. D. Lewis and Robert Lawson Slater, *The Study of Religions*, a Pelican book, London, 1966, pp. 157-8.

The traditional view about the *Vedas* is that they are monotheistic. Their hymns give evidence of both monotheism and monism developing side by side; because, as is quite natural, the Deity for them was both transcendent and immanent. The forces of Nature could not be conceived except as working under the commands of one Supreme Mind. God was conceived as incessantly at work in all the forces of Nature, because the deities were nothing but the manifestation of His power and glory. On the other hand, the reality of God was not supposed to be exhausted in the phenomena and forces of Nature. He was considered to be so above man that it was not possible for the human mind to comprehend the mystery of His nature. Emphatic utterances of the profound sense of wonder and man's incompetence to apprehend the secrets of his own nature and of God are frequently set forth.

The conception of God, in contrast, therefore, to the objects of the universe, giving us an idea of His transcendent character, was a natural and logical stage in the evolution of the Vedic thought. Monism as a system of philosophy and religion need not be taken to be opposed to monotheism but as only the outcome of emphasising the qualitative distinction of God from everything else. It is vitally important to remember that this line of thinking was but the result of stressing the transcendent character of God which, therefore, cannot be grasped in abstraction from His concrete nature revealed in the world and in His relations with man. Hence, the evolution of Indian religious ideas is not from monotheism to monism, but both the points of view have developed side by side because they are complementary, and therefore equally important aspects of the nature of the Deity. The two tendencies imperceptibly drift into each other.

In fact, from the very beginning of Hindu thought, we find that the Āryan mind was not accustomed to think of things piecemeal, that is, in terms of dialectically opposite concepts

but rather in their synthesis and harmony. It has been rightly observed by some Western writers that the Hindu mind does not strictly adhere to the law of excluded middle, which is the basis of the dividing intellect characteristic of the Western style of thinking. The Indian view is said to be that deeper spiritual truths cannot be confined in water-tight compartments.²⁰⁵ Hence the *Upaniṣads* could not be said to have made a radical departure from the Vedic outlook. The opposition of the *Upaniṣads* to the ritualistic and sacrificial cult of the *Vedas* and their indictment of ceremonialism and ritualism have enforced such misleading opinions. The fact, however, is that the revolution in thought which the *Upaniṣads* inaugurated did not mean such a radical contrast between them and the *Vedas* as is generally supposed. The *Upaniṣads* are not so much opposed to ceremonialism and ritualism in themselves, as to the view which looks upon them as constituting the whole content of true religion. Numerous texts from the *Upaniṣads* can be cited to show that they do not repudiate the Vedic *Karmakāṇḍa*, but teach us that ritual and sacrifice should be supplemented by inner purity and personal experience of God. Therefore, the *Upaniṣads* are not discontinuous with the *Vedas* and it cannot be held that they develop a monistic view of God, in direct contrast to the monotheism of the *Vedas*.

The doctrine of personal God as the self-revealing and self-determining supreme, self-conscious mind or intelligence is not alien to the spirit of the *Upaniṣads*. From the abundance in the early *Upaniṣads* of such texts as emphasise God's transcendence and His difference from all the things and beings of the world, it follows that the Supreme Reality was not regarded as impersonal with whom no personal relationship of love, worship and surrender could be established and the knowledge about whom

²⁰⁵ See A. C. Bouquet, *Hinduism*, p. 86; also Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, p. 76.

was impersonal as that in science in which it is not so much our personal equation or reaction to the object known or our modes of consciousness, as mere theoretical knowledge or information of the object that is of any concern to us. Stress is laid more than once on the Supreme Mind being of the nature of a *purusa* or a person and as possessing both intelligence and will.

The *Upanisads* are not tired of teaching us that a personal, first-hand, direct, immediate experience of *Brahman* alone can redeem us from all sorrows and anxieties. This cannot be true of the type of knowledge that is completely abstract and impersonal. How also, again, are we to interpret such texts as teach that *Brahman* is of the nature of bliss, *ānanda*, or *rasa*, that it is His bliss that is shared in different proportions by all human beings, by Gandharvas, by gods and so on, that it is only by experiencing His joy or bliss that all men become blissful, and that if there were no joy of *Brahman* in Nature and history, no one would ever live? Do not all these texts expressly affirm that He reveals Himself in both Nature and history and that His relationship with man is of a personal character? Do not the *Upanisads* also teach that loneliness was rather disagreeable to *Brakman* and that therefore He created the universe to overcome it? Does it not prove beyond all doubt that *Brakman* has personality? He has relations with men and the world.

It may, of course, be admitted that one cannot find in the early *Upanisads* an articulate, well-defined and systematic doctrine of personal God in the same way in which, for example, we find it in the *Bhagavadgītā*. All the same, even they do give evidence of the doctrine of personal God. The widespread view, therefore, that the early *Upanisads* differ from the later *Upanisads* in that they teach abstract monism and the doctrine of impersonal Absolute seems to be completely unwarranted.

In the *Kaṣṭhaki Upaniṣad*, again, we have definite declarations of the absolute power of God and the relative freedom of man. It is said that the *jīva* is too impotent to do anything by himself

and that whatever good action or bad action he does, it is in virtue of his being prompted by God. Theism lays stress on the omnipotence of God and the impotence of man, although it does not deny relative freedom to the latter. How can we understand such a doctrine of God causing human beings to do good or bad actions, except by holding that His relation to man is of a personal nature in which the individual is always under His control? Such a statement is not really a denial of the freedom of man, but only of his self-sufficiency.

Man has been declared to be incomplete (*akṛtsno hyeṣaḥ*)²⁰⁶ and, therefore, not sufficient by himself. In other words, whatever power or energy he possesses, is God's endowment, and it is in this sense that God makes him perform good or evil actions. This is not a denial of man's freedom, because he has at least the free choice of doing anything. God can only persuade; He cannot coerce. We find thus, even in such older *Upaniṣads* as the *Kauṣītaki*, at least a tacit acknowledgment of the theistic view of reality which tells us that man and God are distinct, that man in himself is impotent and that his freedom is not absolute, although the free choice of doing good or bad actions is his special privilege.

The later *Upaniṣads* like the *Svetāśvatara*, *Muṇḍaka* and *Kaṭha* only elaborate and systematize the embryonic suggestions of the theistic view of reality and of the doctrine of personal God, presented in the early works. The transition of thought from the early to the later *Upaniṣads* cannot be said to be abrupt. What is implicit in the early texts is made explicit in later ones. In most of the later *Upaniṣads* clear indications of the finality of the theistic view of reality are found. The *Svetāśvatara* starts with a statement of the problems of philosophy. It asks such questions as: What is the supreme cause called *Brahman*?

Whence are we born? Who is it that sustains us in our existence? Wherein are we established? By whom do we live, that is to say, who is the source of our life? And who again rewards us with pleasures and inflicts punishments on us? These questions are immediately followed by a series of tentative answers, and then ultimately by the view which is the final answer. It is stated that there are many theories concerning the nature of Reality. Some hold time to be the ultimate reality; others think that it is Nature; some again identify it with fate or necessity. Still others are persuaded that the five elements explain all things; others hold that the female sex is the cause of all things. Then follows the statement that *puruṣa* or the finite self is possibly the cause of the universe. But these statements are not taken to present us with any final, unquestionable view concerning the nature of reality, because all these principles are subordinate to the self and possess a reality subordinate to it. The doctrine of the ultimacy of the *puruṣa* or the finite individual is then summarily rejected, having due regard to the obvious fact that it is itself subject to pleasures and pains. This implies control by a superior or higher power.²⁰⁷ Here we have a clear recognition of the being of God as a principle higher than and distinct from man and from all other forms of being which are called in to explain our experience.

It is not only in the *Svetāśvatara* but in *Kaṭha* and *Muṇḍaka* also that theism receives its due recognition. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* starts with the exaltation of *Brahma-vidyā* or metaphysics by its proclamation that it is the final destination of all sciences and disciplines.²⁰⁸ *Brahman* or ultimate reality in this *Upaniṣad* is said to be of the nature of self-consciousness

207. संक्षोभ एषां न त्वात्मभावादत्माप्यनीशः सुखदुःखहेतोः ।

1. 2.

208. ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठाम् । *Muṇḍ. Up.* 1. 1. 1.

and to possess will in addition to mere intelligence. *Brahman* is a *puruṣa* or a person, and the attainment of *Brahman* has been declared to be the final goal of human life. There is no support here to the absorption or the complete merger of the individual in the Absolute. The attainment of *Brahman* is described on the analogy of rivers passing into the ocean, casting aside their names and forms. It is said there that the *jīva* or the individual self enters into communion with God rather than becomes identical with Him.²⁰⁹

The relationship of the soul with *Brahman* is of a personal and not impersonal character. In the impersonal knowledge of science, the confrontation is between the subject, the individual knower, and a non-intelligent fact. Knowledge of God involves the entire personality of man, who becomes immortal only if he endeavours to know Him with all his mind, all his heart and all his will and intellect.²¹⁰ There is nowhere in this *Upaniṣad* any statement or utterance lending support to the identity of the finite individual with the impersonal Absolute.

IX. *Mundaka Upaniṣad*

The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* opens with a discourse on *brahmasidyā*, metaphysics, by exalting it as the supreme consummation of all the sciences and disciplines, *sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā*, and defines its subject-matter which is the knowledge and wisdom of the supreme indestructible *Puruṣa*.²¹¹ The subject-matter, evidently, of metaphysics is God and not the individual self. The discourse on the nature of *Brahman* who is same as the indestructible

209. निरखनः परमं सम्बन्धुपैति ।

Ibid. III. 2. 8.

परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ।

Ibid. III. 1. 3.

210. इदा मनीषा मनसाऽभिरुक्तो य एतद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ।

Kaṭh. Up. VI. 9.

211. 1. 2. 13. See also *fn.* 210.

Purāṇa is so extensive and the predicates and attributes expressive of His nature are so frequently repeated that no doubt is left in the mind of the reader as to whether it is the individual self or God that the seer is deeply interested in describing. The *Upaniṣad* makes a sharp distinction between metaphysics, *parā vidyā*, and secular knowledge, *aparā vidyā*: the former is that which leads to the knowledge of the indestructible principle behind the universe. There is not a single text or passage in the whole course of this *Upaniṣad* bearing on any distinction between the lower and the higher *Brahman* or the ontological difference of value between the God of religion and the Absolute of philosophy.

The terms, 'avidyā' and 'vidyā', refer respectively to the ignorance and knowledge of God. *Avidyā* here is not the cosmic, causative principle of the delusive appearance of the world. Another distinctive feature is continuity with the sacrificial and ritualistic religion of the *Vedas*. For we are warned of the disastrous consequences befalling the person who does not perform the prescribed sacrifices and observe the rituals. "It destroys the seven worlds of that person whose *Agnihotra* (sacrifice) is without *Darśa* and *Paurṇamāsa* (rites), devoid of *Gāturmāsya*, bereft of *Āgrayaṇa*, unblest with guests, goes unperformed, is unaccompanied by *Vaiśvadeva* (rite), and is performed perfunctorily."²¹² But the seven tongues of the sacrificial fire assure the attainment of the world of *Brahmā*, *brahmaloka*, to one who performs all these sacrifices and observes all these rituals, "saying: 'Come, come', uttering pleasing words such as, 'This is your well-earned, virtuous path which leads to heaven', and offering him adoration; the scintillating oblations carry the sacrifices along the rays of the sun."²¹³ The performance of sacrifice, however, cannot be the means to the attainment to the ultimate destiny of man. For it must not

212. I. 2. 3. Swami Gambhirananda, *Eight Upaniṣads*, Vol. II.

213. *Ibid.*, I. 2. 6.

make one oblivious of the higher life of spiritual perfection and God-realization. It is only a preparatory measure leading finally to spiritual enlightenment. The complementary value, however, even of the religion of sacrifice and rituals cannot be questioned. Though it does not represent the whole truth, it is efficacious in at least reminding us of our higher destiny. That is why they are grossly mistaken who think there is no higher truth beyond the boundaries of the religion of sacrifices and rituals. To such persons the warning is given: "Those ignorant people who get elated with the idea, 'This is (the cause of) bliss', undergo old age and death over again".²¹⁴ The approach of the *Mundaka* to sacrifices and rituals does not seem to be so violently radical as to be completely subversive of it.

(a) NATURE OF GOD :

It is of crucial importance to remember that in all the *Upaniṣads*, *Brahman* or *Atman*, acknowledged to be the cause of the universe, has invariably been stated to be a person, a *puruṣa* or of the nature of a *puruṣa*, *puruṣavidha*. The clear suggestion is that It is not only personal but also immanent in all things, in both Nature and history.²¹⁵ God as the Supreme Person is introduced even in the first discourse in the *Mundaka* as the source of all living beings (*bhūtayoniḥ*).²¹⁶ He is eternal, infinite, all-pervasive, subtler than the subtlest and immutable. This positive description of the perfections of God is preceded by a negative description which teaches that He is unlike all things that are the common objects of knowledge. Being Himself absolutely active, He does not need any instrument for the

²¹⁴. *Ibid.*, 1. 2. 7.

²¹⁵. स वा सर्वं पुरुषः सर्वेषु पूर्णं पुरिच्छयः ।

Bṛh. Up. II. 5. 18.

²¹⁶. ब्रह्मूतयोनिम् ।

Mund. Up. I. 1. 6.

expression of His nature and power. The description of the nature of God is so unmistakable that the predicates assigned to Him cannot be taken to be applicable to the individual soul. *Brahman* is not formless, for He is golden-hued.²¹⁷ God is different from the individual self, because He transcends it.²¹⁸ The *Upaniṣad* traces all psychic and cosmic principles and forces to *Brahman* as their source and the whole world is viewed as the great *Puruṣa*, of whom the sun and the moon are the eyes, the heaven the head, the directions the two ears, the revealed *Vedas* the speech, and air the heart. *Brahman* is the indwelling Self of all beings (*sarvabhūtāntarātmā*).²¹⁹ The negative and positive descriptions are invariably in close juxtaposition which renders the import of such passages clear and definite. It is to the effect that just because the language that applies to the finite order of Nature and history cannot be appropriate to the description of the essence of God, it does not follow that human language is completely debarred from speaking anything which may be true of Him. There are many predicates and attributes and perfections which in the opinion of the seer of this *Upaniṣad* can be interpreted only as a genuine and not a mere symbolical description of the nature of God. The fact that man is not able to comprehend God fully is no bar to thinking that He reveals His nature in Nature and man. This much can at least be affirmed that all things depend upon Him and have their existence derived from Him. Since it is He who grants existence to all things, their very being is indubitable witness to His real presence in them. The Infinite is apprehended as embedded in the finite.

217. रुक्मिण्यम् ।

Ibid. III. 1. 3.

218. अक्षरात्परतरः परः ।

Ibid. II. 1. 2.

219. *Ibid.* II. 1. 4.

(b) CREATION, NOT EMANATION :

Creation is the product of the spontaneous overflow of God's creative energy. *Brahman* is not confronted by an external force arresting or restraining His creative freedom. Everything is born of Him without any conscious deliberation on His part as in the case of the ordinary mortals. There is difference between the creative activity of the beings and that of the Infinite. The analogical mode of description of how the finite order originates from the Infinite such as is presented through the similes of the spider emitting and drawing in its thread, of the herbs arising from the earth, of the hairs of the head and body growing,²²⁰ aim at teaching that they are not born out of Him as a matter of necessity, without there being any conscious desire for creation on His part. The finite order does not exist in its own right. Its source is in God. Only a superficial reading of such texts without reference to the contexts encourages emanationist theories. We must not forget that in other *Upaniṣads*—in the *Taittirīya* for example—*Brahman* has been reported to have created the world only after having taken to austerity and after deliberative desire. *Brahman*, possessing both intelligence and will, directs His creative effort to the creation of the world and all the things and beings in it.

In view of this, such similes need not be taken at their face value. It is pointless to speak of the origin of the world in terms of emanation, for even the language of such an account must be linked up with the nature of the Deity. The text in question is designed to trace the origin and existence of all things back to God and not to describe the process of their coming into being. Human knowledge is confined to the finite order of things. But when we intend to speak of the Infinite, we can do so only by falling back upon the modes of expression that apply

220. *Ibid.* I. 1. 7.

to the things of the empirical order. Though the Infinite is embedded in the finite, knowledge about It is unique, and it cannot be identified with that of the inter-finite order. Hence while the similes illustrate only causation in the finite order, they can be aids to our understanding of the Divine causation, and it is just this point that is the subject of such texts. The *Mundaka Upaniṣad* intimates that *Brahman* is omniscient and all-knower.²²¹ The emergence, consequently, of all things from out of Him can be explained in no other way than as a result of the exercise of His knowledge and will.

(c) KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND MAN'S ULTIMATE DESTINY:

The destiny of man can be conceived to be that from which he has emerged. All things tend to return to their source. Since the *Upaniṣad* traces all beings and things back to *Brahman* as their final source and since this source is spiritual in nature and constitution, man's ultimate destiny must be taken to be both the knowledge of and the attainment of the state of communion with Him. Man's knowledge of God must be different from his knowledge of all other things. The *Upaniṣad* tells us that God is the bridge to immortality. It seeks to withdraw man's attention from all trivial things and values of the world with which he is apt to identify himself because of his apparent identity with them. Everything is just a trifle and has therefore to be abandoned.²²² Knowledge of God is not of the nature of exploration. It is of the nature of complete personal involvement. Knowledge of God is not to be identified with knowledge in science. The scientist's endeavour to peer into the mysteries of an atom cannot be an illustration of the way we can hope to know God.

221. *Ibid.* I. 1. 9.

222. तमेवैकं जानथ आत्मानमन्या वाचो विमुञ्चथामृतस्यैव सेतुः ।

Ibid. II. 2. 8.

Mere discussion, intelligence or scholarship is utterly unavailing and ineffectual for the attainment of God who reveals Himself to him alone on whom he elects to bestow His grace.²²³ Meditation and worship are the ways of the knowledge of God,²²⁴ which comes to its fruition not in absorption or identity but rather in communion with God. In proclaiming that all things become one in *Brahman* the *Upanisad* only asserts that they shake off only their names and forms and not their self-contained existence as such : for the knower of *Brahman*, having been delivered from name and form, attains to the Divine Person who is higher than the high.²²⁵

The meaning of the well-known text, 'the knower of *Brahman*',²²⁶ should be construed in the light of the assertion of man's reaching God which suggests therefore communion and not identity or absorption.

The *Upanisad* compares the Supreme and the individual souls to two birds perched on the same tree, one of whom eats the fruits while the other, not eating them, is completely indifferent.²²⁷ It is further stated that the individual soul on account of its impotence and ignorance is subject to sorrow, but that when it serves God and has a comprehension of His glory, it is completely redeemed from all its sorrows. Not only does the poet emphasize in this way the transcendence and omnipotence of God and the impotence of man, but also gives vent to his aesthetic sensibility : for he considers the Supreme Person, the cause of all things, the Lord and the final agent

223. *Ibid.* III. 2. 3.

224. (i) भोमिस्त्वेवं ज्ञायथ आत्मानम् । *Ibid.* II. 2. 6.

(ii) उपासते पुरुषं ये शकामाः । *Ibid.* III. 2. 1.

225. परात् स्वमुपैति दिव्यम् । *Ibid.* III. 2. 3.

226. *Ibid.* III. 2. 9.

227. *Ibid.* III. 1. 1.

behind the universe as being of a golden colour.²²⁸ He says that when the individual self has a vision of the Supreme Lord, he, being completely free from both virtue and vice, enters into communion with Him. The seer does not endorse identity but rather communion with God.²²⁹

Such a description of the nature of both the Supreme Person and the individual soul rules out all possibility of any monistic interpretation being put on it. We find here all the fundamental convictions of theism clearly stated. Not only does the *Upaniṣad* point out how both God and man are different from each other; the former being the Lord and the final source and centre of all things, the controller of all, the ruler of all, the master of all, the sovereign over all, the lord of all beings, the protector of all beings; ²³⁰ the latter being subject to the law of *karma* and to virtue and vice. But it also tells us how He does not become greater by good action nor inferior by bad action and how one can attain to Him. While it is true that knowledge is the means of entering into communion with Him, it is only such men as perform sacrifices and rituals and have their whole and sole interest and enjoyment in their own selves and not in the secular concerns of worldly life that are esteemed as the most exalted of all the knowers of *Brahman*.

Reference to the atomic size of the soul does not mean that the individual self is meant here, because it is asserted to be at the same time to be both large and small, both far and near and as abiding within the interior space or *ākāśa* of the heart of man—which can be a description only of the Being of God. It is neither by sense perception nor by speech or discussion, nor by any penance or action, but only when one has, by equanimity

228. *Ibid.* III. 1. 2-3.

229. *Ibid.* III. 1. 3.

230. *Ibid.*

born of knowledge, attained purity that one is able to see Him by meditation. That in this text meditation has the same meaning as *bhakti*, devotion or worship, is clear from the fact that it is supposed to be the fulfilment to which knowledge leads. It is not the notion of an abstract, impersonal self, the self as pure consciousness that has been mentioned here, but rather one which has desires. For it is said that he who has attained purity attains his desires and conquers all the worlds.

It is for this reason that the *Upaniṣad* exalts the knower of the Supreme Self and commends worship of Him to all such persons as aspire for prosperity and affluence.²³¹ The entire world is centered in *Brahman* and such persons as are free from all desires, having worshipped Him, are able to conquer the whole world. The doctrine of grace emphasising the futility of all knowledge, discussion and scholarship, has been propounded by the statement that by him alone is this Self attained and to him alone It reveals Its nature, whom out of Its own free will It selects or chooses. Attainment of the Supreme Person or God is the final end to which the seer aspires, and one having attained Him, all knowledge is fulfilled and all attachment to secular interests are completely swept away. Such persons, having attained the only present Supreme Reality by all means, enter into all things and are ultimately liberated.

It is here again that the simile of the rivers entering into the ocean has been given. That the individual by leaving behind all name and form attains freedom from them does not mean the extinction of the individual in *Brahman*, but rather his communion with Him: and their separate identity is clear from the statement that the seer only enjoys nearness or rather communion with the Divine Person.

It is such a knower of *Brahman* that is only metaphorically stated to be *Brahman*. That this identity statement, namely, that the knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* does not certainly mean identity of man with God, is, as I have emphasised more than once, apparent from the fact that it is only the attainment of nearness to God or communion with Him that has been declared here to be the final destiny of the individual soul. The particle 'eva' does not point to identity, but rather to the similarity of the individual soul with the Lord or *Brahman*. According to *Nanārthavaijayanāli*, the suffix 'vati' and the words 'vā' "evam" 'eva' and 'iva' mean similarity.²³² Hence, it is not quite correct to regard the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* as teaching the monistic doctrine of identity. For it ends with a phrase which is only apparently susceptible of monistic interpretation.²³³ In the light of all that has been stated in this *Upaniṣad* regarding the nature of God and His relation with man and the means recommended for the attainment of His knowledge and the final destiny of man, it is clear this *Upaniṣad* is beyond all doubt theistic in its intention and spirit.

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* starts with an enquiry into the nature of the self, but as the dialogue between Yama, the god of death, and Naciketa proceeds, side by side with the treatment of the human self, there is also discussion about the essence and character of God. The beginning of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* concentrates on the nature and destiny of the finite self, but it would not be proper to say that this is exclusively the subject-matter. Indeed, the knowledge of the self is a necessary preliminary to the knowledge of God, because God-realization is never possible without self-realization. The *Upaniṣad*, therefore, makes a right beginning by first giving us a consistent

232. साम्ये यद्वैद्यमेव

Nanārthavaijayanāli, the chapter on indeclinables.

233. ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति। *Maṇḍ. Up.* III. 2. 9.

and clear account of the nature of the self and its destiny and makes an attempt subsequently to point out how it is the knowledge of *Brahman*, the Ruler of all, that is the ultimate goal and end of human existence. Since this *Upanisad* also is dualistic in the sense that for it both God and man are distinct principles, and since, again, the worship of God is set down as the condition of the fulfilment of man, the monistic interpretation of its teaching is not plausible.

There are many stanzas in this *Upanisad* which are similar to those of the *Bhagavadgītā*. From which it can be rightly gathered that, as in the latter, so in the former also the subject of treatment is the nature of the self. In fact, unless one is first of all convinced of the fragile and temporary nature of the values of the world, one cannot enter upon an inquiry into the nature of the self. When the god of death offers many allurements to Naciketa and finds that he is not in the least attracted to them, but unflinching in his determination to know the nature of the self, he exalts this keen desire for the knowledge of the self and teaches that by *adhyātma* and *yoga* it is known and that, having known it, one is able to get over both pleasure and distress. He attains that which is pleasurable and rejoices in what is to be rejoiced in. The treatment of the nature of the self proceeds a little further, pointing out how it is immortal; how it is neither ever born nor ever dead; how even while tenanted a mortal body, it is always everlasting and immortal; and that it never kills anybody nor is ever killed by anyone.

The comprehension of the Self is not an ordinary achievement, because the *Upanisad* emphatically points out that this is possible only through the grace of God. That the doctrine of grace is supported even in the *Katha Upanisad* is past all doubt, because again, as in the *Mundaka*, it is here also stated that it is not by discussion, learning or by a penetrating intellect that Its knowledge is possible. On the contrary, It reveals Its nature only to him whom It chooses or elects. The doctrine of grace points not to the finite individual self, but

to God, because a little earlier the difference between the finite self and God has been explicitly mentioned and it is declared that it is by the grace of the Creator that one knows the glory of one's self. It is this Supreme Self that is again supposed in the context to be existing in all the bodies, though Itself incorporeal and as putting an end to all the sorrows of the individual who is able to know It. This is followed by the doctrine of grace, because having stated that Its knowledge is such that it puts an end to all sorrows, it is felt necessary to call attention to the means to the knowledge of It. To lay stress on the fact that the knowledge of the Supreme Mind is not like the knowledge of ordinary things, and that Its knowledge must differ from the knowledge of all other things, it is said emphatically that neither vast scholarship nor keen intellect nor even any discussion can be of any help to the knowledge of the Self and that consequently, it is by the grace of God alone that God reveals Himself to the individual.²³⁴ The reference here is to the grace of God and not to the grace of the finite self, because the very question here pertains to the knowledge of the Self which is possible, the *Upaniṣad* says, by the grace of God.

The *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* counsels us not to look upon plurality, difference or diversity as real in themselves. One who treats plurality and difference as the ultimate view of existence and reality is bound to pass from death to death. That is to say, he can never conquer death. The suggestion is not that difference and plurality in themselves are unreal, but that, apart from their permanent background in *Brahman* or the Ultimate Reality who is immanent in them, they are unreal. This is clear, because after thus repudiating the self-sufficiency of the pluralistic outlook on life, the *Upaniṣad* teaches that the *Purusa* of the

234. *Kāṭh. Up.* II. 20-22.

Or. प्राप्यस्य परमबुद्धस्य स्वप्राप्तौ स्वबन्धोपाबोधपक्षेः ।

Śrībhāṣya III. 2. 84.

size of a thumb is seated within *ātman*. He is the Lord of whatever has happened and whatever will happen in future. Such a description cannot apply to the individual, because the individual is not the Lord of whatever has happened and whatever is to happen in future.²³⁵ That the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* also treats both God and the individual as not quite identical but as retaining their separate identity, is suggested in the comparison that, just as pure water mixed with pure water becomes similar thereto, so also the self of the knowing seer becomes similar to *Brahman*.²³⁶ If, thus, this *Upaniṣad* leaves no doubt about the relation between God and the individual being one of similarity and not numerical identity, how can monism be extracted out of it? The ultimacy and supremacy of God as different from the individual is the recurrent refrain of this *Upaniṣad*. It brings home to our minds the omnipresence of God on the analogy of fire and air; in the same way as fire or air pervades the entire world, God is the internal self of all living beings and assumes many forms. Lest this immanence should be mistaken for identity, the *Upaniṣad* employs the simile of the sun and teaches that just as the sun, the eye of the whole world, is not touched by the defects of vision, so also God, immanent in all living beings, is not at all contaminated by the pains and sorrows to which they are subject. Once again, God and the individual are distinguished in terms of God's intrinsic freedom from the cycle of miseries and troubles which is the common lot of the individual. The individual, subject to pains and sorrows, is advised to seek emancipation from them through seeing God as seated within one's own soul which alone can ensure to the aspirant (and not to others) the happiness that is eternal. God is declared to be the eternal subject as distinguished from other eternal individuals. He is also self-conscious, and distinct from other conscious souls in that it is He alone who fulfils all their

235. *Kaṭh. Up.* IV. 11-12.

236. *Ibid.* IV. 15.

desires. Those who behold him as abiding within their own souls attain eternal peace and not others. He is acknowledged to be the source of the light of the sun and of the moon and the stars, not to speak of fire all of which depend upon Him, the final source of all light and illumination : In other words, He supplies energy to all things. All this is undoubtedly a description of God.²³⁷ He is not only the source of the knowledge and power that belong to all things, but is also that centre of will and power the fear of which makes fire burn and the sun supply heat and Indra and air and Death attend to their own respective functions.²³⁸ The clear suggestion is that God is the Supreme Rational Will immanent in all these cosmic forces and that it is because of His rational will that all of them discharge their respective functions scrupulously. If, therefore, by term 'God' we mean that final source of knowledge and power of all men, that of the existence of the whole world and that of the rational will which makes all cosmic powers discharge their functions most scrupulously, and if again this spiritual principle of unity is not only a principle of bare unity but is such that it differentiates itself by its own will into many forms and also fulfils all the desires of those who are devoted to Him, then what else is required for this conception being that of a personal God ?

The view that the *Upanisads* do not teach one single consistent doctrine of God or ultimate reality is contradicted by the fact not only that in all of them so many texts are common; but there is also a large percentage of agreement in them so far as the nature of the Deity is concerned. Thus, that the Ultimate Reality or the Absolute in this *Upanisad* is

237. *Ibid.* V. 9-15.

238. भयादस्याग्निस्तपति भवाक्षपति सूर्यः ।

भयादिन्द्रश्च वायुश्च सृत्सुर्बावति पञ्चमः ॥ *Ibid.* VI. 3.

personal with whom the individual can establish personal relationships, is borne out by the fact that it demands of the individual his total surrender by all his heart, all his mind and all his intelligence to Him, as the condition for his immortality, his ultimate destiny. In point of fact, we have here an inquiry into the destiny of the individual, because it starts with the question as to what happens to the individual when he is dead and then, in the whole course of the discussion having given a clear idea of what the individual is and how he is related to God, it ends finally with the assertion that the ultimate destiny of the individual is to know Him who is always immanent in the hearts of all men. In the face of such a clear ontological and theological position of this *Upaniṣad*, which it has emphasized more than once, it would certainly be unreasonable to put on it a monistic interpretation. Hence this *Upaniṣad* also, if we look at it in the perspective of clear, unmistakable theistic ideas set forth in it, is unquestionably far removed from atheistic monism.

XI. The *Praśna Upaniṣad*

(a) PERSONALITY OF GOD :

The *Praśna Upaniṣad* is a lucid and comprehensive account of the inquiry made by six questioners about the nature of the Highest *Brahman*.²³⁹ It does not affirm its faith anywhere in the identity of the individual with *Brahman*. Vidyāraṇya, the author of the famous *Advaita* treatise *Pañcadaśī*, makes out that the *Praśna Upaniṣad* identifies the individual with *Brahman*. But there is in the *Upaniṣad* not a single phrase, text or passage supporting this view. On the contrary, it is unquestionably an inquiry into the nature of *Brahman* as the final source of all things on earth. It consists of six questions. Two of them, raised in the beginning, are directly concerned with the source

239. परं ब्रह्मान्वेषमाणाः । Pr. Up. I. 1.

of all existence. The first question relates to the origin of all the creatures. It asks: "Whence are all the creatures born?"²⁴⁰ Obviously, it would be completely unreasonable to consider this question as in any way pertaining to the nature of the individual soul.

Prajāpati is the Lord of creation. The *Upaniṣad* does not hold an impersonal power to be the origin and source of all creatures, but points out on the contrary that Prajāpati or the Lord of creation was verily desirous of having creatures²⁴¹ and that for this end, having performed austerity, He produced matter and life, both the female and masculine principles, for the creation of the world. The answer to the first question, thus, not only maintains that it is mind that is the source of matter and life and expresses itself in them. It lays stress also on the essence of mind itself, namely, self-consciousness, because it also attributes, like other *Upaniṣads*, both desire and will to the Ultimate Principle of the universe. *Brahman* here is rightly represented as the source of all things. The origin of all other cosmic principles like the sun is then explained. All such cosmic principles or powers, however, just because they originate from *Brahman* as Prajāpati, are identified with Him. The search after this Ultimate Principle is held to be the supreme purpose of human life, because those who seek Him by austerity, truth, chastity, faith and knowledge are able to reach Him.²⁴² The answer to the first question concludes with the statement of the highest goal of human existence to be attained by the practice of austerity and chastity. This is the final truth, namely, that

240. कुतो ह वा इमाः प्रजाः प्रजायन्त इति । *Ibid.* I. 3.

241. प्रजाकामो वै प्रजापतिः । *Ibid.* I. 4.

242.

तेषामसौ विरजो ब्रह्मलोको न येषु जिह्ममवृतं न माया चेति ।
Ibid. I. 18.

those who practise chastity and austerity attain also the "stainless *Brahman*-world". In other words, such persons as attain *Brahman* are declared to be free from all crookedness, falsehood and trickery.²⁴³

The second question and the answer suggested to it have direct relationship with the first question. If in answer to the first question mind (because *Prajapati* has desire and will) is taught to be the source of both matter and life, it follows that the answer to the second question also which treats life as the origin and source of all things is really an affirmation of the ultimacy and supremacy of *Brahman* as *Prajapati*. Life has many forms; for example, as fire it burns and it is also the sun: it is also *Indra* the giver of rain. Life is wind, earth, matter, being, non-being and whatever is immortal. It is all-inclusive, because everything depends upon and is sustained by it, as are the spokes by the hub of a wheel.²⁴⁴ The second question is occupied with the many powers which support a creature and also with the chief²⁴⁵ among them. The answer given is that it is life.²⁴⁶ So many stanzas in which the answer to the second question has been given, eulogise the function, powers and attributes of life. *Brahman* is life, since He as the source of life sustains all things. The answer concludes with a prayer to life to protect man and to grant him prosperity and wisdom. This is unmistakably evidence of the theistic point of view, holding to the difference between God and man.

That *Brahman* is the source of all glories and man is intent upon appropriating them from Him, seems to be the teaching of this *Upaniṣad*. Not only the texts and the setting in which all these questions are put and the answers proposed to them clearly

243. *Ibid.* I. 16.

244. अरा इव रयनामौ प्राणे सर्वं पतिष्ठितम् । *Ibid.* II. 6.

245. भगवन्कत्येव देवाः प्रजां विधारयन्ते कतर एतत्प्रकाशयन्ते
कः पुनरेषां बरिष्ठ इति । *Ibid.* II. 1.

246. ताम्बरिष्ठः प्राणः । *Ibid.* II. 3.

suggest the difference between God and man, but there is an unambiguous affirmation also to this effect in the *Praśna Upaniṣad*. It teaches us clearly that *Brahman* is different from the *jīva*.²⁴⁷ Rāmānuja rightly seizes upon this reference as supporting his view of the ontological difference of *Brahman* from the individual.

(b) THE PERSONALITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF:

The self in this *Upaniṣad* is not an abstract principle or a principle of pure consciousness. It is a subject, as it is that which perceives, hears, asks, smells, tastes, thinks and is also the agent of actions. There does not seem to be any hard and fast distinction made between the self as pure consciousness, that is to say, the self as transcendental consciousness utterly destitute of the functions of the mind, and the self as the real agent expressing itself in these psychical functions. We need hardly mention here that in the event of making a clear-cut distinction between transcendental and empirical consciousness, thus leading to the conclusion that the self does not perceive, does not think, does not know and does not perform action, we cannot, in point of fact, escape the drastic consequences of materialism, which attributes all these functions to matter and knocks down the notion of the self as the foundation of morality. The difference between the Supreme Mind and the individual soul receives repeated emphasis, as the latter is acknowledged to have its ultimate destination in the Supreme Indestructible *Ātman* which certainly is *Brahman*. "As birds resort to a tree for a resting place, even so, O friend, it is to the Supreme Soul (*Ātman*) that everything here resorts."²⁴⁸ Such texts leave us with no doubt as to the distinction made between the individual and God and as to the ultimate destination of the

247. स पतञ्जलीविद्यनान्परात्परं पुरिशयमीक्षते । *Ibid.* V, 8.

248. *Ibid.* IV. 7.

self, namely, the attainment of Him which is the crowning consequence of knowing Him.

Such an individual also becomes omniscient. The fact that the nature of the destination and goal of the finite self has been twice repeated and, in both these statements, the attainment of *Brahman* has been acknowledged to be the ultimate goal of the individual, makes it certain that the *Upaniṣad* is not approbative of the monism for which the individual is not different from *Brahman* and where it is the transcendental nature of the self that alone can be said to be its goal. It is, no doubt, true that *Brahman* has been mentioned to be both lower and higher,²⁴⁹ but this does not seem to carry the same meaning as is attributed to the two terms in *Advaita Vedānta*. The difference between the lower and the higher *Brahman* here has reference to the transcendent and immanent *Brahman*, to *Brahman* as expressing Himself in time and history, *aparām brahma*, and *Brahman* as transcending time and history, *param brahma*. The fact that even meditation on one aspect of *Brahman* leads to the attainment of the final destination marks it off from the *Advaita* view, according to which one who meditates upon God, cannot attain liberation, because knowledge is the only means to emancipation.

The *Upaniṣad* ends with the assertion of the all-inclusive nature of *Brahman* in that all things are included in Him in the same way as are the spokes in the hub of the wheel of a chariot. It is this Person or *Puruṣa* who is the ultimate object of knowledge and he alone who knows Him is never tormented by death. There is no higher truth than this *Brahman*. The *Upaniṣad* makes a clear and emphatic reference to the personal relationship between God and man, because the individual is exhorted to worship Him, as it is He who gets us across the ocean of ignorance and is really our father.²⁵⁰ It is worship of God as father that is declared here to get us across death.

249. *Ibid.* V. 2.

250. ते तमर्चयन्तस्त्वं हि नः पिता योऽस्माकमविद्यायाः
परं परं तारयसीति । *Ibid.* VI. 8.

Contrary to the view widely held that the *Praśna Upaniṣad* lends support to the *Advaita* view of non-theistic monism, we find that it contains all the elements of the religious view of reality and the relationship between God and man. The concluding passages are significant, because they declare clearly the worship of God to be the means for the conquest over death and ignorance. And there is nowhere any clear statement in support of the monistic doctrine of the identity of the individual with God. Similarly, the individual is stated to have a personality, because it is not a principle of pure consciousness. Not mere knowledge, but rather the attainment of *Brahman* is the ultimate destiny of the individual. *Brahman* has further been declared to be the ultimate goal of the individual and of all things.²⁵¹ The outstanding characteristics of *Brahman*, therefore, are that He is the ultimate goal and destination of the individual; that there is indeed no truth higher than He; that He is our father and that all things obey His commands. This means that *Brahman* is not an indeterminate principle, but that He possesses all perfections which the individual can, by the worship of Him, appropriate to himself. *Brahman* as *Prajāpati* is also the Creator of all living beings. He is also born as the human individual which means that no unbridgeable gap is set up between time and eternity. All this shows that a correct interpretation of this *Upaniṣad* in the light of its clear statements in many passages bears unmistakable testimony to the theistic view of existence.

XII. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*

(a) GOD, NATURE AND MAN:

Rāmānuja quotes in his *Sribhāṣya* more often from the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* than from any other. This does not mean that, of all the *Upaniṣads*, this alone is theistic in nature.

251. सर्वं परं ब्रह्मणि संप्रतिष्ठते । *Ibid.* IV. 7.

स परेऽक्षरे ब्रह्मणि संप्रतिष्ठते । *Ibid.* IV. 9.

A close, intimate and at the same time impartial survey of all the *Upaniṣads*, earlier and later, has made it certain that they must not be taken to be hostile to theism or to the main principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy and religion. The only distinction that we can make between them is that the principles which are explicitly stated in the later *Upaniṣads* have been only foreshadowed in the earlier. The ideas are there, though not with clear and definite articulation. All the same, it is patent that they do not hold to an impersonal view of existence. The *Svetāśvatara* brings out clearly all the elements of the fully articulated theistic view. It teaches us that reality is hierarchical, consisting of three principles, *Brahman*, the individual self and the world. The two spiritual principles, the Supreme Impeller or *Brahman* and the individual *ātman* or the individual self, are different and distinct, and it is only when the individual soul is favoured by Him that it attains immortality.²⁵² It not only discredits the doctrine of atheistic monism, that the individual self is the same as *Brahman*, but also points out that the service of God is its ultimate destiny. At the beginning we have a statement of all the different theories of Ultimate Reality upheld at that time. What is favoured here is a personal God distinct from the individual self. The latter, just because he is not the master of his own destiny but both enjoys pleasures and suffers from pain, cannot be the lord of all things.²⁵³ God possesses powers which are infinite. The power of God is hidden in His own attributes,²⁵⁴ but it is only such persons as both meditate upon Him and resort to the *yoga* method that are able to perceive the power of God veiled by His glory. The *Upaniṣad* emphatically maintains

252. पृथगात्मानं प्रेरितारं च मत्वा जुष्टस्तस्तेनामृतत्वमेति ।

Śvet. Up. I. 6.

253. आत्माप्यनीशः सुखदुःखहेतोः । Ibid. I. 2.

254. देवात्मशक्तिं स्वगुणैर्निगूढाम् । Ibid. I. 3.

that meditation and *yoga* and not mere abstract impersonal knowledge are effective means to the knowledge of God.

(b) GOD AND THE FINITE SELF :

God, distinct from *prakṛiti* or matter and from the immortal soul, is the ruler of both of them.²⁵⁵ It is meditation upon Him that ultimately leads to the redemption from the delusion of the world. "By meditation upon Him, by union with Him, and by entering into His being more and more, there is finally cessation from every illusion."²⁵⁶ God is not subject to *karma*, because such subjection is the exclusive characteristic feature of the individual self alone. There are many passages which exclude even the slightest possibility of the identification of God with the individual self. First of all, the inherent freedom of God distinguishes Him from the individual self who is not the ruler, but is bound to the *karmas* done by him. In so far as once he performs an action, there can be no escape for him from the operation on him of the inexorable law of dispensation of rewards and punishments.²⁵⁷ But while it is true on the one hand that the *karmas*, good or bad, done by him forge for him the shackles of bondage, on the other he has a sense of fulfilment when he is redeemed from all the chains when he knows God. Secondly, the individual self is ignorant and impotent. Even though both of them are unborn, one is the ruler, while the other is that which is ruled by Him. Different from both God and the soul is *prakṛti* or Nature, which is associated with the individual self for the sole purpose of his

255. इहं प्रधानममृताक्षरं हरः क्षरात्मानावीदाने देव एकः ।

Ibid. I. 10.

256.

तस्यामिध्यानाद्योजनात्तत्त्वभावाद्भूयस्यान्ते बिह्वमायानिवृत्तिः ।

Ibid.

257, *Ibid.* VI. 4.

enjoyment.²⁵⁸ Thirdly, *Brahman* is not the agent of actions like the individual self :

“Now the soul is infinite, universal, inactive,
When one finds out this triad that is *Brahma*.”²⁵⁹

The *Śvetāśvatara* concentrates on all the fundamental principles of theism with such repeated emphasis that it leaves hardly any scope for confusion or doubt as to the theological position which it upholds. Such passages are so frequent that one is left with absolutely no doubt as to the nature of the Deity whose knowledge is the cause of the redemption from all sorrows and sins. Fourthly, some of the characteristic features of God lay stress on His *viśvarūpa* or omnipresence. Thus, He has His eyes in all the directions, His mouth, His arms and feet in the entire world.²⁶⁰ He creates the earth and the heaven : it is He that is the source and origin of all the gods.²⁶¹ But while He possesses all these powers, His relations with the individual are of a personal character, because it is expected from Him that He endow us with a pure intellect or understanding.²⁶² It is no doubt true that this personal Deity is here designated as Rudra or Śiva, though there are also passages reminiscent of the *Puruṣasūkta* which is dedicated to Viṣṇu. We need not fight over the difference of names if the ideas emphasised by both the conflicting names of Rudra and Viṣṇu are one and the same.

258. भोक्तृभोगार्थयुक्ता । *Ibid.* I. 9.

259. *Ibid.*

260. विश्वतश्चक्षुरुत विश्वतो मुखो विश्वतोबाहुस्तु विश्वतस्यात् ।
III. 3.

261. यो देवानां प्रभवश्चोद्भवश्च । *Ibid.* III. 4.

262. स नो बुद्ध्या शुभया सम्युनक्तु । *Ibid.* III. 13.

God is seated in the inmost hearts of all the individuals.²⁶³ He is the Lord and Ruler of all. The statement that God is the Ruler of all and all things are under His control, occurs not only here, but is repeated, as we have seen, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* also, which shows that all the *Upaniṣads* share many ideas in common, thus disproving the truth of the current opinion that no uniform and systematic doctrine of God is to be found in them. God is the ruler of all and the giver of all gifts.²⁶⁴

All this shows that the *Upaniṣad* propounds a doctrine of God who is indisputably personal. Knowledge and devotion are not distinguished, because knowledge here has not been taken to mean a mere theoretical impersonal cognition of God, nor has His worship been uncompromisingly contrasted with knowledge. It is enjoined upon us that we should meditate upon or worship God as abiding in our own hearts. There is nothing that can be equal or superior to Him. Knowledge, strength and action are His intrinsic perfections.²⁶⁵ There are many powers that He possesses.²⁶⁶ There is no ruler of Him, nor any lord of Him.²⁶⁷ He is the cause, lord of the lords of sense-organs. Of Him there is no progenitor, nor lord, nor is He under any principle.²⁶⁸ He is the overseer of deeds,²⁶⁹

263. सदा जनानां हृदये संनिविष्टः । *Ibid.* IV 17

264. तमीशानां चरद् देवमीश्वर । *Ibid.*

265. स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च । *Ibid.* VI 8.

266. परास्य शक्तिर्विपिनैव भूयते । *Ibid.*

267. न चास्य कश्चिन्पतिरस्ति लोके । *Ibid.* VI 9

268. न चास्य कश्चिज्जनिता न चाधिपः । *IBID.*

269. कर्माध्यक्षः । *Ibid.* VI. 11.

abiding in all things,²⁷⁰ the witness of all their actions, self-conscious and one and devoid of the *gunas* of the *prakṛiti*.²⁷¹

The *Upaniṣad* tells us that they alone attain eternal happiness who perceive Him as abiding within their inmost heart.²⁷² He fulfils the desires of all men.²⁷³ It is this God who is the goal of both *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, because it is by knowing Him by both *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* that one is released from all fetters. After Him, as He shines, does everything shine. This whole world is illumined with His light. For getting across death there is no other path than the knowledge of Him.²⁷⁴ He is the maker of all, the all-knower, self-sourced, intelligent, the author of time, possessor of qualities, omniscient and the ruler of both *prakṛiti* and the individual self.²⁷⁵ He is the cause of both the bondage to the world and of redemption from bondage.²⁷⁶ No other principle can be acknowledged to be the ruler of the world.²⁷⁷ It is to this God who has delivered all the *Vedas* that one who seeks liberation has to surrender oneself. The *Upaniṣad* closes its depiction of the nature of the Deity

270. सर्वभूताधिवासः । *Ibid.*

271. साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च । *Ibid.*

272. तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ।
Ibid. VI. 12.

273. एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् । *Ibid.* VI. 13.

274. तमेव विदित्वातिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽवनाय ।
Ibid. VI. 15.

275. स विश्वकुद्विभ्वविदात्मयोनिर्हः कालकालो गुणी सर्वविद्यः ।
प्रधानक्षेत्रक्षपतिगुणेशः संसारमोक्षस्थितिबन्धहेतुः ॥
Ibid. VI. 16.

276. *Ibid.*

277. य इशोऽस्य जगतो नित्यमेव नान्यो हेतुर्विद्यत ईशनाय ।
Ibid. VI. 17.

with the statement that there is no other means, no other method for putting an end to our miseries and troubles than knowledge of God. It is as impossible to expect one's sorrows to be completely eliminated or destroyed without the knowledge of God as it is impossible for men to wrap the entire space with leather.²⁷⁸

The *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* has made a distinct contribution to theism by laying emphasis on all the fundamental points of interest to the central convictions of theism. It is more correct to say that it brings to a culmination the principles of theism enunciated in the earlier *Upaniṣads* than to hold that it makes a radical departure from the intellectual atmosphere of the early *Upaniṣads*. That such an opinion is unwarranted would be apparent to any impartial student of the *Upaniṣads* and of the different stages during which the evolution of their philosophy has taken place. The fact that the *Svetāśvatara* belongs to a late period does not cast any doubt on the authenticity and validity of the doctrines it upholds. According to the traditional orthodox view, all the scriptures fall in one continuous line of development, and it is wholly untenable to say that ideas and thoughts evolve after the fashion of the galloping movements of electrons and protons of modern mathematical physics.

Attention has been called by us to almost all tenets of theism to be found in the early *Upaniṣads* where their tone and language may not be as emphatic and explicit as in the later works. All the same, the ingredients of theism are there. In view of such definite statements, it would not be proper to hold that they regard atheistic monism or impersonal pantheism as the ultimate view of human existence and reality. When we concentrate upon such passages, one certainly is amazed that an interpretation has been put on them which seeks to find in

278. *Ibid.* VI, 20.

them nothing but impersonal pantheism, leaving hardly any scope for all such doctrines as are both conducive to the spiritual welfare of man and also the interests of his secular life. Only in the theistic view of existence and reality can one expect to find a balanced view of life which looks at all the problems of man as basically one problem, not isolating his interests from one another.

This study of the *Upaniṣads* is not the result of looking at them through the eyes of Rāmaṇujā or Radhakrishnan. They are works that speak for themselves and their style is so simple, though archaic, that one can judge for oneself what their meaning is; and when there are such different and opposite commentaries upon them as those of Śaṅkara and Rāmaṇuja, their very opposition compels a comparison of them by referring them back to their sources for deciding the real drift of the passages. We find that Rāmaṇuja's interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* is nearer to their meaning and import than Śaṅkara's.

There are still other problems facing us which must be solved before we can claim to have presented a clear and systematic account of the Viśiṣṭādvaita idea of God. The first concerns the idea of God as set forth in the two other parallel developments of *Vedāntic* thought, namely, the *aupādhika bhedaḥbheda-vāda* of Bhāskara and the *svābhāvika bhedaḥbheda-vāda* of Yādavaprakāśa, who protested against the monistic interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* promulgated by Śaṅkara. But, as we shall try to show, they cannot be taken to have made any substantial contribution, as they, more or less, approximate to the *Advaita* view of God. An attempt to be faithful, honest and sincere to the data of human experience and to the claims for the reality of the world is reflected in them, and they seem to accommodate them in their conceptions of God in contrast to the *Advaita* philosophy. They nevertheless fall into still deeper abysmal pits. A summary treatment of their doctrines of God also can make us understand the radical difference between the notions

of a perfect and an imperfect God. We have to look at Viṣiṣṭādvaita in a historical perspective, because it is only in the light of the problems and issues that Rāmānuja was called upon to face that we can appreciate the central convictions of the theistic philosophy of Viṣiṣṭādvaita. If in order to understand the mystery of the universe we are called upon to believe in the existence of God or the Supreme Mind, we are obliged also to seek in Him the explanation of many other dimensions and characteristic features of human experience without which they cannot be what they are. Therefore, a mere abstract statement or assertion of the existence of God will be insufficient, unless we have also reasons to believe that the nature of human experience and of the world justifies our belief in Him and is also compatible with such nature of Him or with such a conception formed of Him as provides us with the final solution of all our theoretical and practical problems.

There are many other questions about the nature of religious consciousness which also demand explanation. If God is supposed by us to be the final answer to all our doubts and the contradictions which seem to befog and confuse our experience, then God must not only satisfy our impulse for curiosity, but must also integrate the conflicting emotions, passions and desires which are inextricably bound up with and form the very texture of human nature. For this reason, the conception of God must fulfil the criteria of religious adequacy. It is only a perfect God that fulfils such requirements. In this connection, we have to analyse and examine many other *Vedāntic* conceptions of God that have been advanced in protest against the *Advaita* doctrine of the impersonal Absolute.

Secondly, since the *Upaniṣads* were followed by the *Bhagavadgītā* whose place in the corpus of Hindu philosophical and religious writings is unique and unparalleled, it seems the latter must have been composed by its author to meet such demands of religious consciousness as were not squarely and

adequately met in the earlier literature. As one looks at the *Upaniṣads*, one cannot escape the conclusion that one does not find in them any adequate elaboration of the relationship that obtains between God and man and God and the world. It would be an utterly misleading statement, however, to say that the *Upaniṣads* are completely innocent of conceptions bearing upon these problems. We have to bear in mind that they belong to that period of the evolution of Indian religious thought when teachings which were imparted by preceptors to their disciples were transmitted orally; and in this method of instruction in vogue at that time, one could expect nothing but summary explanations, pithy or short statements and vague or obscure suggestions. The *Upaniṣads* are not certainly elaborate, logical and systematic treatments of philosophical and religious problems like those found in modern text-books and, therefore, it is left to us to elaborate in a logical and consistent manner the suggestions that they have bequeathed to us. A very close and intimate study is required for deciphering their views. We are required also to fix our eyes upon the contexts in which apparently conflicting statements occur.

The *Bhagavadgītā* is immune from these defects, because the ethical and metaphysical points of view that it upholds are luminously clear and its central convictions have been so repeatedly emphasized that one is not left with any doubt as to what the author means to say. Perhaps, it is because of its elaboration of the answers pertaining to the nature of God and of the relationship that holds good between God and man on the one hand and between God and the world on the other and, above all, its charming conversational style that it is esteemed as an *Upaniṣad*. Rāmānuja wrote an elaborate commentary on it also.

The *Bhagavadgītā* occupies a place of honour, not by any means inferior to that of the *Upaniṣads*. But the different schools of *Vedānta* were required to enlist its support to their

philosophical and religious doctrines. This craze for writing commentaries on it resulted in obscuring rather than clarifying the answers it proposes to the fundamental questions of philosophy, religion and ethics. Sankara, along with others, wrote his own commentary on the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka-śūtra*, trying to prove therein his *Advaita* thesis of the absolute reality of *Brahman* and the identity of the individual with It. He claimed that it teaches renunciation of the world and that it is only *jñāna* (knowledge) that is the means to liberation. In a brief treatment of the *Gītā* view of life, we have to see if the doctrines enunciated in it endorse the teachings of *Advaita* or of *Viśiṣṭadvaita*. I propose first to outline the main results of the analytical interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* and then, after considering the *Gītā* idea of God, to deal with the *Vedāntic* doctrines of Bhāskara and Yādevaprakāśa. It is proposed to round off the treatment of the *Viśiṣṭadvaita* idea of God with a brief exposition of the nature and attributes of personal God as adumbrated by Rāmānuja and Vedānta Deśika.

XIII. Reconstruction of the Religious Thought of the Upaniṣads

It is now time to outline the results of our inquiry. Let us note at the very outset that the misconceptions about the *Upaniṣads* have become so traditional that they still stand in the way of the right approach to them. It is a tragic irony that they have not so far been interpreted in the light of the religious view of reality that alone seems to be the common note of all of them. They are immortal records of the intuitive experiences of many seers covering centuries. They need not be treated as philosophical and conceptual formulations, given to logical and systematic analysis, and justification of the experiences they had. The seers were interested much more in having the experiences than in building a system out of their beliefs. It cannot be said, however, that there is no evidence of the exercise of logic in them. They present us with brilliant specimens of reasonings of a very high order, supporting their

claims with the help of similes and metaphors. But rationalistic justification must be admitted to be a subordinate element in their teachings.

The one single aim of all the *Upaniṣads* seems to be to demonstrate the reality of a higher spiritual order than the world, which is a system of objects existing in the spatio-temporal order, bound together by so many relations and acting on one another according to fixed laws. It is the first reality with which man comes into contact and, even though he may claim direct intuitive experience of God or *Brahman*, he has to think of Him through the language of the finite world. Man is finite, and though he belongs also to the supernatural order, his contact with the world is direct, so that if ever he has to speak of God, he can do so in no other way than by declaring the dependence of every finite object and of the world on Him.

All the *Upaniṣads* form part of the *Vedas* and are counted among revealed scriptures. There is justification, however, for treating them as brilliant exercises in natural theology. The seers, having immediate intuitive experience of God, seem to have spoken about Him in the language of the world by seeking to establish its dependence on Him. As one closely follows the arguments set forth, one cannot but be impressed by the anxiety on the part of the thinkers to think of God as the necessary implication of the experience of the finite world. The emphasis invariably falls on connecting the phenomenal world with *Brahman*. Their minds move from the world to God in order to suggest that it is not its own explanation, because it can be understood in no other way than by God immanent in it.

The *Upaniṣads* do not stop short with merely hinting at *Brahman* as the principle immanent in the world, but insist also on the way God expresses Himself as an active principle in both Nature and history. In the understanding of the nature of the world and of God as the principle immanent in it, not much

attention has been paid to the way in which both of them have been acknowledged to be related. This is a point of crucial importance, and one is at one's wit's end to find why the relation which has been so unambiguously explained is either altogether left out of account or an interpretation put on it which is quite contrary to the meaning suggested by it. That the *Upanisads* envisage a direct relationship between God and the world and God and man is undisputed. They teach that all things are rooted in *Brahman*, so that neither can *Brahman* be understood in abstraction from the world and history, nor can Nature and history have any meaning apart from God. Their teachings rule out of court such a dualistic view of the relation between God and the world and God and man, as seems to have been set forth in some of the Dialogues of Plato.

There are many passages, both in the early and later *Upanisads*, in which the world has been maintained to be directly connected with the knowledge and will of God. It is clearly indicated that God entered into the world after having created it. The ultimate principle is not that of undifferentiated unity, but one manifesting itself in plurality and difference. The urge to manifest Himself in the world of plurality and difference is intrinsic to God and is not something imposed upon Him from outside. How the world stands related to God has to be understood in the light of such categorical statements. It follows that the conventional acosmic interpretation of the *Upanisads* is not warranted by the kind of relation that is maintained between God and the world in their teachings. If the world is a product of God's knowledge, will and desire, by no stretch of imagination can it be held to be illusory. There is nowhere any specific statement in the whole corpus of the *Upanisadic* literature of the illusory character of the world. There are some texts, no doubt, to which this meaning can be ascribed. They have been interpreted in that light by those for whom the world is false. But such texts do not so much aim at denying the reality of the separate elements as their separate

reality. The world is false only if viewed as apart from *Brahman*, because if it is not supported by Him, it is impossible to think of its existence even for a moment. This seems to have been clearly indicated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. *Brahman* is the cosmic will who maintains all things in their existence. He sustains by His will the whole world including the sun and the moon and the planetary system in the sky. The *Upaniṣads* only remind us again and again that plurality and difference are not real in their own right. They teach only that one who treats plurality and difference as real in themselves, must perish. The denial of plurality and difference is an exhortation for their being viewed in the perspective of the eternal. The *Upaniṣads* seek to synthesise unity and multiplicity, the finite and the infinite, being and becoming, permanence and change, and all other abstractions of the dividing, finite intelligence of man. From such an account of the relation between God and the world, the doctrine of personal God as a self-manifesting and self-differentiating principle is only a short step.

The passages which seem to stand in the way of the doctrine of personal God are those which have negative statements designed to divest God of all attributes. But the proponents of the impersonal view of reality seldom pause to think that personalists are as much anxious to deny imperfections in God as they themselves are. Both impersonalists and personalists seek to emphasise the transcendence of God and His intrinsic freedom from all evils and imperfections, characteristic of the finite order. Such negative statements have no other purpose than emphasise this immunity of God from all imperfections. A text tells us, for example, that God is all-pervasive, bright, bodiless, scathless, pure, free from evils, wise, intelligent, all-encompassing and self-existent. In the same breath it is declared that God is free from evils and is the source and centre of all perfections.²⁷⁹ Denial of imperfections and the affirmation

279. *Iṣa Upaniṣad* 8. See also *Ch. Up.* VIII, 1, 5.

of perfections are juxtaposed from which no other meaning can be extracted than that, while negatively *Brahman* is free from all conceivable defects, positively He is the source and centre of all imaginable perfections. The *Upaniṣadic* texts abound in positive assertions describing the nature of God. The result of the knowledge of *Brahman* is the attainment of the state of concrete fulfilment and the satisfaction of all desires—which is certainly incongruous with the doctrine of impersonal God. If *Brahman* in the *Upaniṣads* is the source of all spiritual values and the state of perfection following upon the knowledge of Him, and the attainment of communion with Him is one of concrete fulfilment and enjoyment and the satisfaction of all desires, there is no room in them for the doctrine of impersonal *Brahman*.

The conventional interpretation of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* has not infrequently been on pantheistic lines. They are claimed to present the doctrine of Ultimate Reality not only as a principle of abstract identity, but also as being utterly impersonal. Thus the Absolute of the *Upaniṣads* is said to be inaccessible to the finite intelligence, and even the predicates can by no means be taken to be the determinations of its character. This Absolute turns out to be a completely undetermined cause of the universe, whereas such a cause as the *Upaniṣads* maintain to be the explanation of all the forms of being is spiritual in nature. Even in the monistic interpretation, there is no departure from the recognised fact that the *Ātman* is at the root of the universe. But it carries the transcendence of the *Ātman* to such extreme limits as virtually to deprive it of all meaning.

In academic circles, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* are supposed to put forward mutually contradictory views of the Deity, so that it has become customary to hold that the former supports monism while the latter is nearer in spirit to the teachings of Rāmānuja. Traditional orthodoxy does not

approve of this difference of approach to the understanding of the nature of Ultimate Reality in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. The treatment of the conception of God in the *Gītā* from the point of view of Viśiṣṭādvaita will be taken up later. But, for the present, it may be remarked that if at all any difference in their treatment of the nature of the Deity can be discerned, it is doubtless one of mere emphasis and elaboration. The *Upaniṣads* are revealed scriptures and records of the intuitive experiences of the seers. We can expect in them only suggestions and hints in the direction of our understanding the nature of the Deity and the way in which man and the world can be related to Him. The *Bhagavadgītā* on the other hand is *Smṛti* and is designed to carry in its teachings the tradition of the thinking of the people at large. It is so-called, because it enlarges and elaborates, explicates and amplifies the incipient thoughts and ambiguous suggestions of the *Upaniṣads*, the unsystematic productions of an earlier epoch. What divides the *Gītā* from the *Upaniṣads* is the emphasis in it on the personality of God. But it may be asked if the *Upaniṣads* are utterly silent on the question of the ascription of personality to God and freedom and independence to the individual self. The idea of personality carries with it a definite meaning. It is the key to our understanding the moral and spiritual dimensions of human experience. There are some philosophers, however, who hold that the idea of personality bristles with contradictions and inconsistencies. They invariably take it in its lower sense. But to say that God is personal need not suggest that, like ordinary mortals, He is a slave to His joys and sorrows and a thousand other fluctuating desires, emotions and ambitions characteristic of a growing self. It means rather that He possesses self-consciousness and will which are manifested in Nature and history in the form of Nature's laws and in the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty.

Development of character by the cultivation of the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty is the characteristic, inalienable

feature of the finite individual. Man grows in his being by expressing and realising in his thought and conduct the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty. But what does development mean? Man himself belongs to a process and he cannot himself be the source of all that he possesses and that he wishes to realise in his conduct. Isolated from the process, he could never make any progress. The process itself is not the exemplification of something coming out of nothing. The individual can develop in the stature of his being only by his constant dependence upon that which starts the process. He has to unfold and manifest that which eternally is. We can think of the development of the powers and ideals of man only by referring him back to the process which originates with God. It is impossible to think of the manifestation of the moral and the spiritual ideals in man without thinking of their being centred in the eternal goodness at the root of the universe. These are elemental convictions from which even aggressive scepticism cannot dislodge us. But the question is whether the *Upanisads* are completely silent on the problem of the characterisation of the nature of the Deity in such terms as these. Is it that *Brahman*, as conceived by them, is completely undetermined, so that belief in God could not be an inducement to making any distinction between moral and spiritual values and many other higher interests in our theoretical life without which we cannot think of human progress in all the departments of human civilization and culture? Have the *Upanisads* left us quite in the dark on a problem so momentous as this?

If personality, therefore, means personality as revealed in the passivity and imperfection characteristic of an infinite individual and the possibility of his development only as a part of the process advancing from orb to orb in the realization of the ideals of truth, goodness and beauty, then they do not support such a doctrine of personal God. They do not think anthropomorphically about *Brahman* as the Greeks thought about their gods. They rather think of Him as possessing all

imaginable perfections of which the powers and glories of man can be only faint reflections and feeble shadows. But if to assign personality to God means that He possesses consciousness and will as the essence of His nature which man also shares with Him and is in this respect akin to Him and made in His image, then *Brahman* in the *Upaniṣads* is definitely personal. The seers could not have made the mistake of thinking of the world in terms of *Brahman* as its basis and at the same regarded Him as impersonal or imperfect. The problem of the personality and the individuality of the self is also a debatable subject as far as the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* are concerned.

Individuality is more fundamental than personality because it is its ontological basis. As essence and existence are inseparable, in that there is no essence except as it is embodied in existence, so also personality has its roots only in individuality. To say that the individual has personality amounts to the statement that it is a higher form of being than that which at a lower level and as the basis of it, is designated as the individual. No meaning can possibly be attached to personality, if individuality is not recognised to be its ontological basis. They are only qualitatively different. Ontologically, they are expressions of one and the same form of being. The self cannot have personality if it is not already an individual and does not possess a will of its own which must differ even from the will of God and from the wills of many other individuals. It is by reference to the distinctive worth of the separate wills of the separate individuals that we can judge the moral excellence of their actions.

The *Upaniṣads* distinguish the self from its physical accompaniments. They maintain it to be utterly different from the world and the body outside it. As the self is aware of its distinction from the world outside it, and the objects which it knows, the *Upaniṣads* repudiate all attempts to assimilate it to any form of corporeal existence. Emphasis on its difference

from corporeal existence makes the seers of the *Upaniṣads* fall back on the language of transcendence. Yet they are anxious not to construe its transcendence in utter abstraction from the corporeal existence. Transcendence is apprehended only through the exercises of its activity and the expressions of its powers and functions in the physical medium. The self has its own powers and its own functions: it has its own desires and will, although it can express them only through a physical medium. Hence, although the principle of its action is within itself, it cannot be active, unless it expresses itself through the body. Close association of it with the body is both a curse and a blessing for it. Since it is intrinsically free from the pressure which the body or matter can exercise upon it, we can say that it does not possess those features and characteristics which it comes to express only in its embodied existence. The denial of its characteristic features is understandable by reference to its dependence on the body or matter as the necessary vehicle of their expression. It does not however deny the higher level of action or the will that belongs to the self. Lest its activities arising from its contact with the body should be taken to constitute its essence, the *Upaniṣads*, alive to the dangers of the corrupting influences of matter, teach that it does not know, feel and act. Such texts warrant the commonplace view that the self has no personality.

They have also been utilised for lending support to the division into the empirical and transcendental aspects of the nature of the self. But if the being of the self is divided into these two aspects, there can be no meaning in talking anything about it. The transcendental and the empirical aspects are after all the expressions of the nature of one and the same self. We can think of an ideal state of perfect peace, harmony and integration which the self enjoys, but this is by no means a hindrance to our thinking of its concrete expressions as belonging to the same centre of experience. The two are complementary and correlative. Both are mutually implicative. The

Upaniṣads do not draw a hard and fast line of demarcation between the empirical and the transcendental features of the self. We cannot divide the one from the other. Many of the texts of the *Upaniṣads* regard these empirical features of the self as real expressions of its nature and character: "Now, when the eye is directed thus toward space, that is the seeing person (*cākṣuṣa puruṣa*), the eye is (the instrument) for seeing. Now, he who knows 'Let me smell this'—that is the self (*Ātman*); the nose is (the instrument) for smelling. Now, he who knows 'Let me utter this'—this is the self: the voice is (the instrument) for utterance. Now he who knows, 'Let me hear this'—that is the self; the ear (is the instrument) for hearing".²⁸⁰

It is the individual self that knows, feels and acts through the senses, the mind and the intellect. It is the self that is the dynamic principle of both knowledge and will behind all its activities. It is none the less the same self that, having risen above these ordinary fluctuations of its empirical life brought about by its dependence on these instruments for the expression of its powers, thinks, feels and acts in such a way that its thoughts, feelings and actions cannot be classed with those of unregenerate individuals. Its thoughts, feelings and actions are so completely overhauled that the perfect individual does not seem to be thinking, feeling and willing, as judged by ordinary standards. In the *Upaniṣads* the denial of these functions of the individual self has been made from the point of view of mystical experience in which the dualities and contradictions of the ordinary life are so completely overcome

280. यत्रैतदाकाशमनुविषण्णं चक्षुः स चाक्षुषः पुरुषो दर्शनाय
चक्षुरथ यो वेदेदं जिघ्राणीति स आत्मा गन्धाय घ्राणमथ यो वेदेदमभि-
व्याहाराणीति स आत्मा भिव्याहाराय वागथ यो वेदेद् शृण्वानीति स
आत्मा श्रवणाय श्रोत्रम् । Ch. Up. VIII. 12. 4.

that the conduct of the individual is not intelligible in terms of the ordinary norms of conduct. In our ordinary consciousness, all our thinking, feeling and action have their source in selfishness, pride and egoism. But the mystic, even though acting energetically, does not act because, his selfishness having been extinguished, he cannot be said to thinking, feeling and acting as do ordinary individuals. Hence the *Upaniṣads* cannot be claimed to deprecate individuality. In the case of the mystic, the physical body, the senses and the mind are no longer insurmountable barriers to the freedom of the self. This state cannot be construed in abstraction from the concrete contents of the self. The *Upaniṣads* refer to a higher dimension of the will of the self when they describe the highest state of mystical experience. It is only a superficial reading of the literal meaning of some statements, torn from their contexts, that can give rise to the impression that the self is an abstract principle and hence has no individuality.

But the *Upaniṣads* do not deny to the individual the consciousness of his identity even in the highest states of mystical experience. For instance, what does the famous text, "I am *Brahman*",²⁸¹ mean? This proposition is doubtless an emphatic indication of the individual's feeling of exaltation in the state of mystical communion with the Deity. In our survey and examination of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, we have seen that such texts need not be interpreted pantheistically. The nine similes with which the *Chāndogya* illustrates the declaration, "That thou art", do not support the extinction or absorption of the individual in *Brahman*. If the soul is eternal, we cannot legitimately conceive of its absorption or extinction in something else. All analogies in contexts such as these harmonise with theism rather than pantheism or monism.

281. अहं ब्रह्मास्मि ।

Brh. Up. I, 4, 10.

The *Upaniṣads* need to be viewed and understood in a religious perspective. In them philosophy and religion fuse into each other, because philosophy for them is the knowledge of God and religion the science and art of communion with Him. Hence the conventional distinction of knowledge and devotion or of knowledge and action is not warranted by them. These distinctions have been grafted on the *Upaniṣads* by a latter-day, extremely sophisticated and abstract philosophic thinking which drew its inspiration from Buddhist rationalism and phenomenalism. The monistic interpretation indeed raises more problems than it claims to solve. It is obvious that the theistic interpretation has many advantages over the monistic, because not only does it solve the philosophical problems more effectively than monism, but it also achieves remarkable success in harmonizing the apparently conflicting texts of the *Upaniṣads*. No wonder, modern studies tend in the direction of theism rather than in that of monism.

CHAPTER VI

VISISTADVAITA IDEA OF GOD IN THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

I. The 'Gītā' as an Enquiry into the Problem of Human Conduct

Tradition associates the *Bhagavadgītā* with Vaiṣṇavism. S. N. Dasgupta is of the view that it is the scripture of *Ekānti Vaiṣṇavas*.²⁸² "The *Bhāgavata* religion was the immediate stimulus to the synthesis of the *Bhagavadgītā*", says Radhakrishnan. "It is actually suggested that the teaching of the *Gītā* is identical with the doctrine of the *Bhāgavatas*. It is sometimes called the *Hari-gītā*".²⁸³ In the *mokṣa-dharma-parva* of the *Sāntiparva* of the *Mahābhārata* the *Bhāgavata* religion is declared to be superior to the creed of the hermits, and when Janamejaya enquires of Vaśampāyana as to the history of this religion, the latter says it was taught in the *Gītā* when the armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas were against each other and Arjuna was expressing his reluctance to take part in the battle.²⁸⁴

The affiliation of the *Bhagavadgītā* to the *Upaniṣads* and its prestige as the very voice of the Supreme Lord are undisputed. Leaders of religious thought wrote commentaries on it in order to force its opinion into their own doctrines. This practice

282 *Indian Idealism*, p. 61, Cambridge University Press, London, 1933.

283. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 526.

284. *Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva*, cecxiviii. 5-8.

prevailing among *Vedāntic* teachers to write commentaries on it in order to show that it endorses their views and not those which are opposed to their faiths, resulted in the presentation of conflicting interpretations of it with the drastic consequence that in course of time it became a problem to ascertain what the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* originally imparted by Kṛṣṇa to his friend and disciple, Arjuna, were. Of all the commentaries that came to be written in course of time, only two, namely, those of Śaṅkara and Rāmaṇuja, deserve our closest attention, because of the diametrically opposite conclusions they have put forward in their attempt to present a systematic and coherent exposition of the teachings of this scripture.

It is necessary to enter upon a detailed study of the doctrines of the *Gītā*. For the sake of clarity and brevity, I shall touch only upon the central problems and issues discussed in it. In this connection, we may be reminded at the very outset that a true insight into the nature of its philosophical and religious doctrines can be attained only if we do not lose sight of the nature of the problem that originated its teachings. This problem, there is hardly any doubt, is ethical. It is in other words the problem of the ideal of human conduct.

The dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna designated as *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* dwells upon the ethical problem posed by the latter as to whether he should engage himself in battle and thus appropriate to himself the heavy weight of sin caused by killing his own friends and relations and his old teachers and elders, or whether, taking account of the drastic consequences of the fratricidal war, he should, in consonance with the demands of convention or tradition ordained at that time, seek liberation of the spirit by renouncing the world, by living, in other words, upon alms and retiring into the forest. The psychological battle going on within the mind of Arjuna has been very impressively and brilliantly depicted in the first chapter. It is evidently the moral problem with which the *Gītā*

starts. The question concerns the ideals of action and renunciation, of *pravṛtti* and *niṣṛtti*, in vogue at the time when the *Gītā* was composed.

That there is in all of us a moral sense, a sense of value which judges things and actions in terms of their qualitative distinctions of good or bad, right or wrong, cannot be questioned. Man as a self-conscious being, before he engages himself in any particular activity, judges it in terms of the consequences arising from it and evaluates it as good or bad, right or wrong. There are many thinkers who maintain that the science of morality or ethics is derived from experience and has, therefore, no *a priori* origin. But, even though in our ordinary life we make such distinctions, it is after a good deal of reflection upon our moral experiences that we are able to evolve principles of ethical discrimination. We have perceptions already of actions judged by us to be good or bad, right or wrong. The experience itself of judging the things and activities as high or low, right or wrong, is already there, though only after mature reflection upon such judgments we extract their eternal principles. Thus, it cannot be proper to hold that morality, by which we mean the evaluation as good or bad, right or wrong, is a *posteriori* and not *a priori*.

The complex structure of our mental life is such that we cannot know anything nor enter into any course of action, unless it makes an appeal to us in terms of its being beneficial or harmful to us. All our activities, therefore, are understandable in terms of this standard of evaluation that we unconsciously adopt even in our day-to-day experiences. Man's theoretical, emotional and practical experiences form the organic unity of his mental life and, therefore, they cannot be separated from one another without doing violence to their nature. As all things that we know and all actions in which we engage ourselves have relation to our feelings and emotions, it follows necessarily that, concurrently with the knowledge as to their external

structure and organization, we also know them to be pleasing or painful. When we grow in age, we also know whether they are proper or improper, good or bad, right or wrong. Man lives in society and it is by reference to the members of the community that his actions also are to be evaluated in the light of a standard of ethical judgment.

It has to be acknowledged that there is an inborn, innate faculty in man which enables him to discriminate between ethically good and bad actions. No doubt, things and actions can be judged differently as to their moral value or quality depending upon the training, discipline and intellectual equipment of different individuals. It is quite possible that actions considered by some to be worthy or virtuous are declared by others to be unworthy, vicious and sinful. But there is no denying the fact that the faculty of judging things as good or bad, right or wrong is innate, *a priori*. In such circumstances, our ethical notions are bound to differ from individual to individual, as suggested in the theory of ethical relativity of the Greek Sophists. All the same, the application of reason to the scrutiny of such individual differences as to the moral quality of actions leads to the formulation of a universal principle underlying even conflicting notions about what is good and what is bad. Socrates, for example, was confronted with this very problem of ethical relativity posed by the Sophists, which he felt himself called upon to investigate by allowing reason to bear upon it. His scrutiny disclosed the inconsistencies and absurdities of the fluctuating moral notions of the Sophists. He was able in this way, perhaps for the first time in the history of ethical thought, to formulate the rational principles of ethical life.

All these considerations with regard to the formulation of the universal principles of ethics out of our conflicting moral judgements arise from the fact that there is already in us the *a priori* consciousness of what can be judged better or worse in

all human affairs. Inasmuch as all activities and all things are referred to human interests as regards their capacity for promoting or thwarting them, man is obliged, at least from the point of view of his own selfish ends, to judge them as good or evil. Thus, it cannot be said that man does not possess an *a priori* faculty to judge things as better or worse. Maybe, he judges the world of things and activities by reference to his own interests. Yet he is bound to take them into account by considering their value in the larger context of the community or the class to which he belongs. It is in this procedure of evaluating human activities, whether in the context of the interests of the individual himself or in relation to the larger life of community, that the objective principles of ethics come at a later stage to be conceptualized and formulated.

Ethics, as the science of human conduct, is occupied with the interpretation, integration and systematization of the moral principles underlying our ordinary judgments of better and worse, good or bad, right or wrong with respect to ethical facts experienced by us. Hence, we can no more say that without their being already an *a priori* ethics as a science of morality we cannot judge things as good or bad, than that unless we possess a systematic and abstract knowledge of cause and effect, we can not know what things are causes and what things are effects. The experience of facts themselves precedes a systematic and abstract interpretation of them with a view to extracting the universal principles underlying them.

The most outstanding fact about the *Bhagavad-gita* that has to be taken to be the starting point of any treatment of its teachings is that according to it, there are already facts of our moral life which we judge to be better or worse, good or bad, right or wrong, whether by reference to our own interests or by reference to the community or even tradition or convention. There are in this way conflicting standards of judgement out of which objective moral principles have to be evolved.

In the very opening verses one can catch a glimpse of such conflicting standards of moral judgment to which Arjuna resorts to escape from the responsibility of engaging himself in battle. The *Bhagavadgītā* starts with a problem of human conduct, the propriety of engaging oneself in a fratricidal battle. Arjuna is neither a moral rake, completely insensible to moral distinctions, nor one who has reached the highest moral perfection so that what he could do even involuntarily could not but be intrinsically moral or good. He is, therefore, like ordinary individuals poised between these two extremes of moral bankruptcy and moral perfection, which means that moral distinctions have meaning for him. Just because the *Gītā* is an answer to the doubts of Arjuna as to the propriety or impropriety of his taking up arms, and as to whether it is the ideal of ceaseless activity or of renunciation that could be esteemed as worthwhile, it is a treatise on ethics.

That is why it is called *yoga-śāstra*. In the colophons to all the eighteen chapters it is called so. But this *yoga-śāstra* (or science of ethics) is not without its support in a theory of the universe or what we call metaphysics. We hear these days of ethics without any presupposition of metaphysics, that is, without any reference to the nature of reality as a whole and to the consideration of the nature of man and his place in the scheme of things. Without ethics metaphysics is impossible, because there can be no ethical distinction, unless man feels free and unless the nature of the universe is such that the freedom of man is a fact. Hence if ethical discrimination presupposes freedom of will and if our actions can be called good or bad only when we are free to perform them, it must be examined whether we are free or not, or whether we also, like the material objects, are enchained to the iron law of necessity.

Problems of ethical conduct cannot, therefore, be discussed without any reference to the problems concerning the nature of reality. Ethics, though autonomous in a sense, implies as its

metaphysical background, a systematic view of the nature of reality as a whole for its possibility. In a purely naturalistic universe in which all things are determined and events cannot happen otherwise than they do actually happen, there can be no question as to whether our actions are good or bad. Hence, ethics presupposes a metaphysical background and that is why the *Bhagavadgītā* as a treatise of ethics is claimed to be supported by a metaphysical doctrine of the nature of reality. The fundamental point that one cannot lose sight of is that it is at the same time both an ethics and a metaphysics, an ethics against the background of metaphysics. The author of the *Gītā*, therefore, seems to have embarked upon the treatment of moral principles by taking due account of a particular view of the nature of reality as its basis. It follows that at least in his mind there was no inconsistency or contradiction between the ethical teachings the divine dialogue was supposed to teach and the metaphysical doctrines on which they were based. The progress in thought here is from ethics to metaphysics, from the validity of ethical judgments to their metaphysical presuppositions that are the foundations of ethically valid moral judgments. Since the author did not himself frame a metaphysical conception which contradicted the kind of ethics it teaches, only that interpretation may be regarded as correct which does not place these two questions, the ethical and the metaphysical, in two incoherent and contradictory or rather diametrically opposite compartments.

II. Monistic Interpretation of the 'Gītā'

Of the many commentaries that have come down to us the oldest is by the great *Advaita* teacher, Śaṅkarācārya. According to him the *Bhagavadgītā* teaches the renunciation of the world and the renunciation of all worldly duties. He seeks in it support for his *Advaita* and is convinced that it teaches the non-duality of *Brahman*, the identity of the individual with *Brahman* and the falsity of the world. Even though the

individual has no identity of his own separate from *Brahman*, nor the world a real existence, having only an apparent existence, like that of the illusory snake where there is really a rope, belief in the existence of the universe and of the individual self has the semblance of reality so long as one does not get out of the nightmare of nescience, ignorance or *avidyā*. The hypnotic spell of *avidyā* continues to enchant the individual into a false perception of things. So long as one does not get to a true and real understanding of the nature of the universe and of one's own existence as being the same as *Brahman*, all actions have to be performed as propaedeutic to the emergence of that spiritual wisdom that obliterates all distinction and difference and results in identity consciousness.²⁸⁵ Consistently with this metaphysical position, he maintains that *karmas* (or actions) have no transcendental value. No doubt, there are a few passages in his commentaries on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā* that state that actions have to be performed in the state of ignorance for attaining the spiritual insight of the identity of the individual with *Brahman*, while after the attainment of wisdom they have to be performed in a selfless spirit for the welfare of the

285. (i) सव्यवहाराणामेव प्राग्ब्रह्मात्मताविज्ञानात्सत्यत्वोपपत्तेः स्वप्न-
व्यवहारस्येव प्राक्प्रबोधात् । यावद्धि न सत्यात्मैकत्वप्रतिपत्तिः
तावत्प्रमाणप्रमेयत्वात् तत्र विकारेष्वनृतत्वबुद्धिर्न कस्यचिदुपपद्यते ।
विकारानेवत्वहं ममेत्यविद्यात्मात्मीयेन भावेन सर्वो जन्तुः प्रतिपद्यते
स्वाभाविकीं ब्रह्मात्मतां हित्वा । तस्मात्प्राग्ब्रह्मात्मताप्रतिबोधादुपपन्नः
सर्वो लौकिको वैदिकश्च व्यवहारः ।

Saṅkara's Commentary on *Brahma-sūtras*, II. 1. 14.

(ii) समस्तस्य मिथ्याज्ञानविजृम्भितस्य मेदव्यवहारस्य सम्यग्ज्ञानेन
बाधितत्वात् । *Ibid.* II. 1. 22.

world.²⁸⁶ He also gives a few hints here and there about looking at the world from the point of view of one who has realised one's identity with *Brahman*. These suggest that the world may be regarded as His appearance and hence real.²⁸⁷ The world is not cancelled, but viewed as rooted in *Brahman*. Such hints are however rare, and probably not more than two or three passages can be found in support of these ethical and metaphysical viewpoints which are in flagrant contradiction of the ontology he consistently vindicates in his writings.

The negative metaphysics and ethics in which the non-duality of *Brahman* is held to be incompatible with and subversive of the real existence of the world and of the individual self, attract the main emphasis in the teachings of the great master. It is to that dialectic by which he seems to wipe out altogether the consciousness of the real world and the real individual, that he recurs again and again. Sāṅkara's genuine intentions in ethics and metaphysics have to be discerned in the light of such doctrines and arguments as receive repeated emphasis in his writings. Passages in which the opposite tendencies of looking at the world and the individual rather realistically are found, cannot be regarded as basic to his philosophy. Since he himself subordinates the positive and affirmative point of view to the negative, and since he cannot abandon the central thesis of the non-duality of *Brahman*, *Advaita* has to be regarded as teaching in metaphysics nothing but the identity of the individual with *Brahman*, an identity which altogether wipes out the reality of the individual self and also of the universe. This is what is traditionally taken to be the essence of *Advaita Vedānta*.

286. E.g. यदि अनात्महस्त्वं तदा ब्रह्मशुद्धयर्थं तत्त्वविषयेत् लोक-सङ्गमहार्यम् । Sāṅkara's Commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, IV, 18.

287. विद्यायाश्च काय सर्वस्यैवभाषापत्तिः ।

Sāṅkara's Commentary on *Bṛh. Up.*, I, 4, 10.

Śaṅkara in the course of his writings has affirmed again and again his fidelity to the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. He says, for instance: "The *Veda* is absolutely valid with regard to its subject-matter just as the sun is the one direct means of throwing light on the form of an object, whereas human statements are in need of another means of corroboration and are also intercepted by the memory of the person making the particular statement, and hence they are further removed from what they express".²⁸⁸ About the *Bhagavadgītā*, he says that it presents the quintessence of all the *Vedas* (*samasta-Vedārtha-sārasaṅgrahabhūtam*). His loyalty to the Hindu tradition is beyond question. But it is a historical commonplace that he tried his utmost to assimilate Buddhism to Hinduism, to demonstrate that Buddhism had nothing distinctive of its own so that it could claim an independent status alongside of Hinduism. This he sought to do by writing elaborate commentaries on the sacred texts, in which he brought out how in the traditional orthodox Hinduism the distinctive Buddhist doctrines had already found an honoured place.

But as the fundamental presuppositions of both these religions are radically dissimilar, Śaṅkara could not achieve complete success in blending together these two contradictory streams of thought. He looked at Hinduism from the Buddhist angle of vision and his commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahmasūtra* reveal this unmistakably. It is still hotly debated if Śaṅkara impressed the Buddhist stamp on Hinduism. Later Hindu critics accused him of being a crypto-Buddhist. Even such a great admirer of the genius of Śaṅkara as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, frankly admits that many of the inconsistencies and contradictions of Śaṅkara's *Advaita* stem from his unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the two mutually opposite traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism.²⁸⁹

288. Śaṅkara's Commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, II. 1. 1.

289. See p. 268 *supra*.

In fact, all great thinkers are as much the children of their age, subject to its profound influence on their thinking, as they are themselves responsible for shaping its main tendencies and leaving on it the indelible stamp of their own personality. This is by no means derogatory to the thinkers concerned because, after all, howsoever original they may be, they cannot make any progress without taking account of contemporary currents of thought. Sāṅkara's denial of the reality of the world appears to be only an extension of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness, of which the aim was to withdraw the mind of man from the values of the world. While Buddhism abolished the individual self and reduced it to a mere aggregate of changing conscious states, Sāṅkara questioned the separate and independent identity of it by proclaiming that it is nothing but a mode of *Brahman*. The denial of personal immortality in both Buddhism and Sāṅkara's *Advaita* is the inevitable and direct consequence of the refusal to acknowledge the separate and independent ontological identity of the individual self. Consciousness in both *Advaita* and Buddhism is not a quality or a property possessed by its owner, but is itself given ontological status. In neither is the self a knower and an agent of actions. Freedom of will has no transcendental meaning in both. Because of this massive Buddhist influence in his thinking, Sāṅkara was not able to interpret Hindu scriptures in a detached spirit. According to Dr. Dasgupta, it was first of all Gauḍapada who laid the foundation of the interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* on Buddhist lines.²⁹⁰ In his view Sāṅkara's *Advaita* is not a true representation of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, but is rather a product of his own independent reasoning and his original thinking. Accepting the tradition that the *Upaniṣads* expound a coherent and consistent philosophy, he tried to interpret them as supporting his absolute monism. But he faced difficulties in dealing with theistic or dualistic texts.

²⁹⁰. See p. 259 *supra*.

He was also obliged to interpret some of the *Brahma-sūtrās* in a dualistic way. The *Gītā* is ascribed a philosophy that he holds to be reasonable.²⁹¹ But, as Dr. Dasgupta puts it: "If, however, by *Vedāntic* influence one means the philosophy of *Vedānta* as taught by Śaṅkara and his followers, then it must be said that the *Gītā* philosophy is largely different therefrom."²⁹²

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Dr. S. N. Dasgupta are not the only authorities who endorse the truth of this contention. Sri Aurobindo also points out that the pessimistic and negativistic outlook of Buddhism penetrated into Hinduism through the *Advaita* of Śaṅkara and the teachings of Buddha. Robert Hume, the author of the *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, says that the *Upaniṣads* are realistic in spirit and that there is hardly any trace of the doctrine of Illusion in them after the analogy of the snake-rope or the shell-silver. It is in the writings of Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkara that such analogies figure prominently to support the view that the world appearance is false. Hume challenges Gough's interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* which teaches that they treat the world as false or unreal. Thus he says: "Gough, in his *Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, maintains in my judgment an erroneous position, viz., that they expound the pure *Vedāntism* of Śaṅkara, who flourished at least a thousand years after their date. Gough's book is filled with explanations bringing in the similes of the rope and snake, the distant post seeming to be a man, the mirage on the sand, the reflection of the sun on the water etc., all of which are drawn from Śaṅkara and even later Hindu philosophers, and not from the *Upaniṣads*."²⁹³

291. *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II. p. 2, p. 438.

292. *Ibid.* p. 478.

293. Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 88, fn.

In his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Śaṅkara tried his utmost to consolidate his view that it teaches precisely the same doctrine in ethics and metaphysics as constitute the core of his non-dualism, namely, that it treats renunciation or *karmānyāsa* as the highest spiritual ideal for the attainment of liberation.

The two ethical ideals of *prauṣṭi* and *niṣṭi*, of activism and passive renunciation, as a means to the attainment of liberation and perfection, were in vogue from time immemorial. The prevailing confusion in thought occasioned by conflicting ideals at the time when the *Gītā* was written, called for a synthesis of both of them by blending together the essential but incomplete truths each of them inculcated. Even as early as the *Iśāvāsya Upaniṣad*, attempts were made to synthesise them by declaring that their opposite assertions expressed complementary truths of spiritual life and that only a combination of them opened the way to the realisation of the ultimate meaning of human existence. The very language in which it speaks, setting forth in the first half of a stanza the contradictions of the partial truths in the opposite ideals of life and in the second half an effort to blend them together, is an indication of the dominance of the spirit of synthesis even in the very beginning of Hindu speculation.

III. Presuppositions of 'Niṣṭi'

The *Gītā* is an advance made in the same direction and the only task by which it seems to have been prompted is the synthesis of apparently antagonistic ideals of human conduct. There are many stanzas which clearly declare that only he who is able to transcend the antithesis of the opposite points of view can see the truth. In the introduction to his commentary, Śaṅkara admits that these two ideals of performing actions and discharging all obligations and duties of life and of seeking perfection by the renunciation of all actions and worldly duties and by meditation upon God after retirement to the forest.

were in vogue from distant antiquity and that both had the sanction of the *Vedas*.

It is still a controversial issue as to which of these two ideals was of indigenous origin and which was imported into Hinduism from outside. Prof. M. Hiriyanna is of the view that the ideal of *nirṛtti* was not originally taught by ancient Hinduism, but that it was imported into it from outside. In view of the elaboration of rituals which were relevant only to the householder, it was not probably intended that everyone should become an anchorite and a monk. The ideal of *sannyāsa*, "though adhered to by many of the orthodox schools like the *Advaita*, may have originated in heretical circles with the general world-view of some of which it so well agrees."²⁹⁴ Without pursuing the debate further, let us concede that both ideals are very old. In the early stages of the evolution of the ideal of *nirṛtti*, it would probably have been recommended only as an attitude to be developed for the performance of efficient action, side by side with the attainment of harmony and peace in one's personal life. It expresses a very simple truth, and in its incipient stages it must have been thought to be only a method of performing an action and not as expressing a complete truth. But, as it so often happens in the history of cultural life, truths which are only partial are in course of time taken to represent the whole of reality and to embrace the whole of life. Kṛṣṇa Himself traces the history of such a synthesis and harmonious attitude to life which had been transmitted from one generation to another, but which in the course of time lost its hold on the people.²⁹⁵

Despite the clear affirmation of both these ideals of human conduct having the sanction of *Vedic* religion, Śaṅkara in the

294. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 114.

295. *Bhagavadgītā*, IV. 1-2,

course of his commentary employs all his intellectual energy to fortify his own ethical ideal of renunciation and, as a metaphysical support to his ethical point of view, his doctrine of *Advaita* which in essentials breathes in the same intellectual atmosphere as Sāṅkhya. If renunciation is the only final effective means to the attainment of liberation, and if it is the individual soul that has to attain liberation, then it has to be compatible with its nature; and Sāṅkara on the lines of the thinking of the later Sāṅkhya elaborated his doctrine of the intrinsic inactivity of the spirit.

All actions, change or movement, purposive or mechanical, voluntary or involuntary, belong to non-intelligent matter. *Puruṣa* or the self is an utterly indifferent principle, completely untouched by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. Sāṅkhya must have been intended originally as a discriminative method directed to the knowledge of the self as different from non-intelligent matter and its modes. The soul, though spiritual and having therefore within it the power of will, requires the assistance of matter for the manifestation of its active power. It cannot be active but for the assistance it receives from matter and its products. In the effort to discriminate between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* and to emphasise the transcendent purity of the former, all actions which belong to the sphere of change and movement were considered to be the property of matter and not of the self. Sāṅkhya is the Indian analogue of the Cartesian conception of the uncompromising dualism of matter and mind. Inconsistency in thought impels both Sāṅkhya and *Advaita* to cut *puruṣa* off from *prakṛti* and its movements and activities.

Reality is divided into two watertight compartments, one being the sphere of eternity in which no change, nor even such activity as is involved in all forms of conscious experience, takes place, and the other which is the scene and sphere of nothing but change and activity. There is no question of any contact between them, nor of any possibility of their co-existence,

because perception of change and activity of any form in *puruṣa* is the product of misperception. If liberation and perfection are states of the self, and if they eternally belong to it, then action or will cannot have any moral, spiritual or religious significance: the self being inactive, liberation cannot be attained by action. *Mokṣa* itself, if it is eternal, cannot be the product of what is historical and non-eternal. The highest ideal of life is the isolation of the *ātman* from the scene of change, movement and activity. The super-historical is here viewed as anti-historical. Eternity and history are divided into watertight compartments. In consonance with this metaphysical doctrine, *jñāna* or discriminative knowledge alone which is antithetical to *karma* or action, is the means to liberation.

Such propositions are common to both *Advaita* and *Sāṅkhya*. In spite of its advocacy of transcendental unity and the oneness of all things, *Advaita* is, as a matter of fact, a philosophical defence of dualism, because there is no attempt at any harmony or synthesis of truths which are opposite, though no doubt complementary. Spiritual life and the truths of religious experience are not so simple and cannot be expressed in neat categories and concepts, as both *Advaita* and *Sāṅkhya* contemplate. Be that as it may, in accordance with this point of view and in conformity with the demands of logic and consistency, *Advaita* maintains the view that the *Bhagavadgītā* puts forward the doctrine of the renunciation of all actions and of the adoption of the monastic order of life as having been taught by Kṛṣṇa.

According to the *Advaita* interpretation of the *Gītā*, in ethics it is supposed to teach renunciation of all actions, and in metaphysics, as a background against which its ethics is intelligible, an impersonal view of human existence and of the Ultimate Reality, according to which all personal relationships belong to the sphere of illusion, neither man nor God being conceived as personal. All actions or movements, not being the

real expression of the will of the individual souls, belong virtually to the same category as mechanical activity, because they cannot be true revelations of the nature of God or man. Nature and super-nature, eternity and history, matter and spirit are placed in watertight compartments with no attempt to institute a harmonious synthesis between them.

IV. 'Karma-Yoga' Versus 'Nivṛitti'

Whatever may be said in favour of the ethics of renunciation and the metaphysics of impersonal *Brahman* and the falsity of the world, the *Gītā* teaches, beyond the slightest possibility of doubt, the ethics of what is known as *karma-yoga*, the doctrine of the performance of all one's duties in a desireless frame of mind without hankering after the fruits of actions. The presentation by Arjuna himself of the ideal of renunciation to Kṛṣṇa as an escape from his obligatory duty to take up arms against those who break the laws of society, adds poignancy to the situation and has a determining influence on the drift of the teaching. In the first division of six chapters, the *Gītā* does not leave anyone in doubt as to what it intends to teach as the ideal of human conduct. Stanzas and passages need not be quoted to prove the thesis that it teaches performance of action rather than its renunciation. Kṛṣṇa reminds Arjuna over and over again of the propriety of taking up arms against his enemies and instructs him to fight freely and independently. The sanctity of Arjuna's profession is stressed because of his having been born in the caste of warriors. Even materialistic arguments are advanced for the purpose of goading him to action. Action is better than inaction.²⁹⁶ Even such simple truths as that no one can live without action even for a single moment and that for an embodied being there is no escape from the performance of action at least for the sustenance of his life, are pointed out as arguments in favour of the life of action. Kṛṣṇa tries to

296. कर्म ज्याको ह्यकर्मजः । *Bhagavadgītā*, III. 8.

convince Arjuna of the propriety of participating in the battle from so many points of view that there is not the least doubt as to the nature of the ideal of conduct on which His emphasis uniformly falls. Kṛṣṇa is not at all troubled as to whether action or renunciation is proper or improper for persons born in a particular class or caste. The truths he advances are general and apply to all.

But the followers of *Advaita* hold that, according to the social custom prevailing at that time, Arjuna, born as a Kṣatriya, was not entitled to renounce the world. *Karma-yoga* was recommended as the ideal of conduct for Arjuna, not because it was to be adopted without any exception by all men, irrespective of the class to which they belonged, but because Arjuna was not a Brahmin. Nor was his spiritual maturity of such a high order as to entitle him to the life of renunciation. The implication is that if Arjuna had been a Brahmin, then Kṛṣṇa would have most probably dissuaded him from fighting against his enemies and asked him to renounce the world. But Dronācārya, a Brahmin, was himself a Field Marshal in the army opposing Arjuna—which means that the rule concerning the adoption of the different orders by people belonging to different classes was not very rigidly observed. Therefore, the *Advaita* view that *karma-yoga* is suitable only for unenlightened people and persons belonging to castes other than Brahmins, does not seem to be correct.

Kṛṣṇa has cited His own example of engaging in ceaseless activity, despite the fact that there is nothing which He has not already attained and nothing which still remains to be attained by Him. In the face of such categorical and unambiguous declarations, the *Advaita* stand that renunciation of action is the highest ideal, of life according to the *Bhagavadgītā* is untenable. Moreover, the *Bhagavadgītā* is the gospel not of individual liberation alone, but of cosmic liberation as well. It is not only personal ethics and the salvation of the individual, but rather impersonal ethics or universal ethics and the salvation of the

entire mankind that is the main object of the *Bhagavadgita*. It considers the problem of ethics, taking into account the larger interests of mankind as a whole and not only from the restricted point of view of the spiritual perfection of the individual alone. Even the worth of individual perfection has to be judged in the light of its bearing upon and relevance to universal salvation. Hence performance of action even after the attainment of spiritual wisdom is what the *Gita* recommends to all.

No doubt, it abounds in passages which emphasise the superiority of *jñāna* or wisdom to action or *karma*. The fire of wisdom, it says, reduces all actions to ashes.²⁹⁷ All *karman* ultimately end in wisdom. One should take one's refuge in knowledge or wisdom.²⁹⁸ There is nothing else so sanctifying as knowledge.²⁹⁹ The *jñānin* or the wise person is the Lord's very self.³⁰⁰ Such are the praises lavished on *jñāna* by Kṛṣṇa to emphasise the importance and significance of wisdom as a method of *karma-yoga*.

The *Gita* tries, therefore, to harmonize the conflicting tendencies and disciplines by accepting their truths and rejecting the element of error involved in them. But, in the history of spiritual life as elsewhere, it often happens that an idea or thought which emphasises and is true of only a part or an aspect of a complex truth, is taken to be the whole truth itself. *Prasutti* and *nivṛtti* as ideals of conduct are related together as are form

297. ज्ञानाग्निः सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ।

Ibid. V. 31.

298. कूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ ।॥ *Ibid.* II. 40.

299. न हि ज्ञानेन सदस्यो पवित्रमिह विद्यते । *Ibid.* IV. 38.

300. ज्ञानी त्वार्यैव मे मतम् । *Ibid.* VII. 18.

and content. They cannot be separated from each other, because there can neither be a form without a content, nor a content without a form. *Nivṛtti* is that aspect or side of human conduct which gives a certain shape or form to it and organises the raw materials of our instincts, desires, impulses, emotions and passions. The discipline and organisation of these raw materials of human nature are as necessary as is their very existence to make it possible for their form to act on them. In view of the complexity of human nature, therefore, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* need not be disjoined from each other. Both of them are elements in one whole and, without one of them, the other is completely unintelligible.

Contrary to the explicit teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* and its verdict in favour of the *karma-yoga* which is the synthesis of both *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, the adherents of *Advaita* philosophy maintain that Kṛṣṇa teaches renunciation of action after the attainment of wisdom. The wisdom which is the goal of spiritual discipline and endeavour is, according to *Advaita*, nothing short of the renunciation of all actions. It is thus that, through misuse of the term '*jñāna*' or wisdom in course of time, it came to be disassociated from the path of action or *pravṛtti* and was set up by the followers of the school of renunciation as an independent, self-sufficient ideal of life. Renunciation, thus, is declared to be the characteristic feature of *jñāna*.³⁰¹

The ethics of *Advaita* is made compatible with the psychology of the self by falling back upon Sāṅkhya philosophy in order to prove that the self, in contrast to matter, is essentially an inactive principle. If the highest end of human existence can be realised only by the renunciation of all actions, then such a point of view must be the expression of the real nature of the self, because *jñāna* also, which is expressed and practised in

the renunciation of all actions and is the highest end of human existence, must be an expression of the nature of the self. Inaction or rather freedom from all activity, movement or change, belongs to the essential nature of the self or *puruṣa*. Though the non-intelligent *prakṛti* does not have conscious experience as its property, nor is the *puruṣa* an active agent, through misconception the former appears to be conscious and the source and centre of all experiences, and the latter, the agent and enjoyer of all the actions performed. This is a misconception of the nature of both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* from which we need to be delivered. The highest state of perfection to which *Advaita* aspires, therefore, is that state of fulfilment and self-realisation in which it enjoys perfect rest, peace, integration and harmony without being conscious of them. It is a state in which all change, movement and activity has completely disappeared and the self enjoys the highest peace and happiness in its individual solitariness. This is what is designated as aloneness or *kaivalya*.

Agency is attributed to the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. All movement, change and activity is due to the *guṇas*. This is the reason for the cultivation of the habit of thinking that the self is not an agent. As inactivity is the transcendent truth, it is a misconception to treat the self as an agent of all actions and in consequence to hanker after the results or the fruits of actions that are performed. *Karma-yoga*, therefore, according to the *Advaita* interpretation, is based upon the conception of the transcendent passivity of the self and the activity of *prakṛti*.

The *Gita* lays stress on the intrinsic purity and perfection of the self and its difference from *prakṛti* and its modes. It distinguishes also the self from the body and teaches that it is the immortal core or essence within the physical body which is mutable and mortal. Some of its stanzas teach that the *yogi* is one who cultivates in himself the habit of thinking that it is not he who does anything but that it is rather the changes and

movements in *prakṛti* that must be deemed to be really responsible for all actions. Since all actions, therefore, are done by *prakṛti* and their results also follow as a matter of course, it is no use thinking that the self is an agent and holds title to the enjoyment of the fruits of actions which it erroneously thinks are solely and exclusively due to it. Such a view, undoubtedly, approximates to materialism, because it amounts to the virtual evaporation of all difference between mechanical activity and teleological or voluntary activity. It is the demand of the consistency of *Advaita* ethics with metaphysics that leads to such a psychology of the self. Hence the *Gītā*, according to the teachers of *Advaita* philosophy, advocates the doctrine of the activity of *prakṛti* and the transcendent indifference and passivity of the self. As there are passages in the text in support of both these points of view, there is, they say, no contradiction between the ethics, metaphysics and psychology taught therein.

In such a scheme of thought, there is no place for a kind of metaphysics that can be the basis of the theistic view of reality and existence. If the self is a principle of indifference and is in reality passive in nature, all change, movement and activity, even psychological experiences, do not really belong to it, but are rather superimpositions on it. Hence it must be nothing but pure consciousness which is the same as the Absolute or *Brahman*. God is not ontologically different from the self, so that there can be that type of relation between them which we designate by the name of religion. In his commentary on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara clearly affirms that "as the son of Kuntī is the same as Rādheya, so it is the *Brahman* that appears as individual persons through beginningless *avidyā*; the individual persons so formed again delusively create the world-appearance through their own *avidyā*" 302

The transcendental identity of *Brahman* and the individual self leads to an arbitrary rejection of the reality of will and self-determination, the characteristic mark of both the individual self and God as personal beings. Spirituality and personality possess the same connotation and, in the absence of will and self-determination, we cannot distinguish spirit from matter. To say that God and the individual self are spiritual, but that they do not possess personality because the characteristic feature of will and self-determination are due to *avidyā* and *māyā*, is to utter words wholly devoid of any meaning. But it is exactly this position, to which *Advaita* seems to approximate. This very ontological position with respect to the identity of God and man appears to be vindicated.

Thus, there is no scope for theology or metaphysics. Indeed, one cannot make any distinction between metaphysics and theology, because it is theology alone that gives content to metaphysics, but *Advaita* philosophy is a metaphysics without theology, because religion, according to it, belongs to the world of appearance and even *Īvara* or God is phenomenal and not the highest reality. If the self, however, is the same as *Brahman* and has no will or self-determination of its own, there is in this scheme of thinking neither any scope for ethics, nor for religion. Whereas the *Bhagavadgītā* avows its claim to be a treatise of ethics in the framework of metaphysics or, we might even say, theology.

V. Ethics and Metaphysics

In the above brief sketch of the *Advaita* interpretation of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*, stress has been laid on the impossibility of ethics in that form of transcendent metaphysics in which no room is left for the personal individual will of both the individual self and God. If there is no ground for the view that there is any difference between the theoretical and practical functions of reason, if it is one and the same reason which is

manifested on the one hand in the laws of Nature that are discovered and correlated by the scientists and which, on the other hand, is also concerned with the ends to be realised by man, there cannot be any ultimate discord between science and philosophy and metaphysics and ethics. The different methods of the study of the facts of experience arrive at substantially one and the same point of view. Whether the scientist maintains that the law of uniformity of Nature is the fundamental assumption of the inductive procedure of his undertaking or whether the metaphysician asserts that there is unity and coherence in the facts and phenomena of the universe and that the human mind can understand them, both teach that there is reason at the root of the universe and that reason must have a centre of its own. But, on the other hand, the same reason in the personality of man accounts for the eternal impulse in him for introducing harmony and integration among his fluctuating and conflicting passions, emotions and desires of which peace and happiness are the product, being the final end of all the activities of man.

The author of the *Bhagavadgītā* sets himself to establish a clear and definite point of view concerning the art of living and all the practical problems of man with a view to making it possible for him to realise harmony, integration and peace. But, since there is no reason for any contradiction between the practical and the theoretical functions of reason, all the practical concerns of man are understandable only in the well-grounded scheme of metaphysics of the nature of the structure of the universe of which man forms a part. Hence psychology and ethics cannot be independent of metaphysics.

In some of the well-known commentaries it has been admitted, no doubt, that the *Gītā* holds the position that the unselfish performance of one's ordained duties according to one's station in life can lead to self-fulfilment, liberation, peace and happiness. While careful about the drift of its practical teachings, they are careless as to the metaphysics underlying the

ethics. Even though the Song Celestial may not have been intended by its author to be a cast-iron, logical and systematic treatise on the intimate connection between metaphysics and ethics, yet it must have occurred to his mind to set forth such a doctrine of reality in accordance with which alone the problems of human conduct could be easily understood. It is true that the metaphysical basis of its ethical point of view may not have been argued out, yet the fundamental question of the possibility of such grounds as spell out the ethical norm of human conduct it inculcates must have been tackled by him. There are definite hints in the course of the dialogue in this direction.

Many writers who are rightly inclined to hold that he teaches that actions must be performed desirelessly, however, succumb to the enchantment of the non-dualistic and pantheistic metaphysics which cannot accommodate its clear conclusions. Tilaka, in his scholarly commentary known as *Gita-rahasya*, takes such a stand. He has attacked the non-dualistic interpretation that holds the renunciation of action to be the ultimate means to liberation. Resolutely and systematically he has argued to establish that the unselfish performance of one's duties is the unmistakable conclusion of its ethical philosophy. But he appears not to have taken due note of the bearings of the practical side of the teachings with the theoretical side or metaphysics. He seems to have lent support to the non-dualistic pantheistic view of reality which, indeed, leaves no room for the ethical conclusion he upholds. No one can be a *karma-yogi* in ethics, if he is a pantheist or a non-dualist in metaphysics. But this is the mistake that Tilaka seems to have made. The reason for such a mistake cannot be anything other than a partiality for a certain metaphysical view.

The very fact that the *Bhagavadgita* mentions and reviews and evaluates different points of view, both in ethics and metaphysics, makes it clear that it is acutely aware of all the conflicting metaphysical and ethical doctrines at the time it was composed.

Its author must have had a definite point of view of his own. The very attempt on his part to venture upon an assessment of various points of view, presupposes the validity of his own ethical and metaphysical doctrine. Criticism is impossible without certain assumptions which underlie it. The spirit of synthesis is the characteristic feature of the *Bhagavadgītā*; it honours and respects the truths it finds in the doctrines it criticises and sometimes it points out that many tenets, though apparently opposite in form, are really identical in import, intent and meaning. It is quite illegitimate all the same to hold that the *Bhagavadgītā* is a sample of unsystematic eclecticism which combines together mutually opposite doctrines without making any attempt at the formulation and vindication of its own metaphysics and ethics. But, as our argument proceeds, it is our hope to convince any dispassionate student that while there is no antagonism or contradiction between the ethics and the metaphysics of the *Bhagavadgītā*, it sets out to advance its own metaphysical and theological doctrines in the perspective of which its practical philosophy is rendered intelligible. Hence the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies which confront the casual student can be overcome by commanding its perspective as a whole and not by fixing one's eyes on isolated texts torn from the context.

VI. *The Notion of the Highest Good: Integration and Harmony*

The central thesis of the *Bhagavadgītā* concerns the highest practical end to be realised by man. It is true that this cannot be identified with any particular desirable objective like health, wealth, honour and so on. What man desires and wills is not health, wealth and honour, but happiness, harmony and peace to be attained. Health, wealth, honour and such things are not sought as ends in themselves, but rather as means to the supreme good, which as the *Gītā* so often repeats, is ultimate happiness, *paramaṁ sukham*, *ātyantikaṁ sukham* and so on. There

is indeed one supreme end, the highest goal of human life, towards the attainment of which all other ends are the means.

The *Bhagavadgītā* recognizes the difference between relative values and the absolute value. As a matter of fact, happiness or peace is a state of the soul and not a property of the body. The English verb, "enjoy" is used as an indication of the state of the soul and not of the object. It denotes that we enjoy ourselves by means of such and such things and not that we enjoy music, painting and so forth. Therefore, so far as the supreme good is concerned, what we really desire is our own enjoyment or happiness or bliss which comes from ourselves and of which the objects of our specific desires are only the means.

No one, therefore, can expect to satisfy himself or seek his fulfilment by the satisfaction of particular desires. But there is the common ignorance about what one really desires and wills and what one does only apparently. This is the crux of the problem. In our short-sightedness, we forget that we are rational, conscious beings seeking the satisfaction and fulfilment of our personality as a whole. We are prone to think that it is only the particular objects of our impulses and desires that lead to our happiness.

It may be admitted that they meet some of the ends of complex human nature and they contribute to the supreme or absolute good, namely, the realisation of happiness. But a part cannot be identified with the whole or the means with the end. Most of the problems and enigmas in our individual or social life spring from this common mistake of identifying the part with the whole or the means with the end, and it is to this congenital error of ignorance or *avidyā* that *Vedānta* in all its forms calls our attention. Ignorance or *avidyā* is at the root of our failure to discriminate between the means and the end, the part and the whole. Therefore, *Vedānta* makes it the supreme object of its thinking to direct us to a systematic and complete knowledge of what we really desire and will, as distinguished from what we only apparently desire and will.

It is just this problem of the means and the end, the part and the whole, the problem, in other words, of an incomplete satisfaction of a part of the personality of man and its complete fulfilment, that initiates the inquiry into the worth of *nivṛtti* and *pravṛtti* which is the starting point of the *Bhagavadgītā*. It is an ethical problem. The question is not merely concerned with how the moral dilemma of Arjuna as to whether it is better for him to perform action by engaging himself in war or to renounce action, can be solved, but it also concentrates on the nature of the *summum bonum*, the supreme good that is to be realised by him through his moral choice. Thus, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to enlighten him on wherein lies his ultimate, supreme good.

The *Gītā* leaves no one in doubt as to the course of action and the ideal of life that it enjoins upon man for the achievement of his liberation and the attainment of his fulfilment, integration and harmony. The importance of the path recommended is all the more enhanced by its attitude of respect and sympathy even for the doctrines and opinions that it rejects. In the history of thought, it very often happens that a part of truth is identified with the whole of it with the consequence that an opposite point of view, just because the part is not the whole, makes its appearance in order to compensate for the deficiencies in it. In this way, two opposite points of view which are merely parts of a truth, can exist only as united as integral elements in a higher synthesis. But they are often allowed to enjoy a vogue for a certain period of time as self-contained and self-sufficient abstract principles of life and conduct, before their very antagonism and opposition lead to the realization of the fact that the truth, even though it is found to be only imperfectly revealed and partially manifested in each of the parts, is to be sought in its integrity in the whole of the complex structure of thought and reality. The separated elements, just because they do not represent the whole of the truth, are bound to be sharply divided from each other. The

clash and conflict of doctrines leads subsequently to the realization of the organic truth which is to be found in the whole of which they are inseparable parts or aspects. That is what we call the dialectical movement of thought. At the time the *Bhagavadgītā* was composed, the contemplative and activistic ideals of life seem to have been recognised as self-contained and self-sufficient paths for the attainment of *mokṣa*. The contemplative ideal of *nirvṛtti* or rather the renunciation of action was then more fashionable than *pravṛtti* or the ideal of the performance of action.

It was left to Kṛṣṇa to solve the antinomies of the ideals of *pravṛtti* and *nirvṛtti*. The issue of *karma-sannyāsa* raised by Arjuna at the beginning is only a part of the larger problem as to wherein, as a matter of fact, lies the truth whether in *pravṛtti*, the activistic discipline of performing action without its moderation by *nirvṛtti* in the spirit of detachment, or in the contemplative ideal of formally renouncing all actions without any regard to the development of the attitude or the consciousness appropriate to it. Kṛṣṇa steers a middle course between these two apparently conflicting ideals by pointing out that truth lies neither in the one nor in the other, but in the relative value of each of them.

The emphasis of the *Bhagavadgītā* falls on *pravṛtti* or the performance of action. This emphasis is so frequent, so strong and so permeates the whole of the discourse that no ingenuity in interpretation can leave us in doubt as to what the author intends to say. The ideal of contemplation or *nirvṛtti* can be looked at from two points of view, one which stands for only a particular attitude towards the world and the other for an insight which does not necessarily follow from it. The *Advaita* emphasis on *nirvṛtti* or contemplation is certainly not rejected by the *Gītā*. There are numerous stanzas which advocate the superiority of *jñāna* or *nirvṛtti* to action or *pravṛtti*. *Jñāna* or contemplation

is like the fire which reduces to ashes all action.³⁰³ Similarly, all actions ultimately are transcended in knowledge or *jñāna*. Such are some of the texts in which emphasis falls on the ideal of contemplation, by which we are mistakenly driven to the conclusion that renunciation of action can by itself lead to the attainment of the highest goal of life. The *Bhagavadgītā* does not make such a mistake: it does not identify the part with the whole or the means with the end.

Contemplation or *niṣṭti* has been set up only as an attitude, that is to say, as the consciousness of the truth pertaining to the mysteries of world, man and God. Kṛṣṇa lays stress on taking to the path of contemplation only as an attitude or as a consciousness concerning the nature of reality. As an attitude to the world, *niṣṭti* counsels us not to treat terrestrial values as ends in themselves, but rather as aids to the promotion of higher moral and spiritual interests and values. It directs us to the control of the senses and the mind, so that reason may be made to check the selfish passions and the hankering after the pleasures of the world. But this is only an attitude, and it does not involve or presuppose the falsity of the world and of the human ego. *Niṣṭti* as a method has to be distinguished from *niṣṭti* as a doctrine or as a self-sufficient ideal. The ethical theism of the *Gītā* teaches *niṣṭti* only as a method or a technique of doing works and not as a self-sufficient ideal complete in itself, which can be pursued independently as the means to the attainment of the highest end. It clearly states that when the path of contemplation is seen as it should be, there can be no antagonism between action and inaction.³⁰⁴ But it is just this problem of realizing what the true meaning of contemplation and action, of *pravṛtti* and *niṣṭti*, of *jñāna* and

303. See fn. 297 on p. 379.

304. एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ।

Bhagavadgītā, V. 2.

karma, is that is very difficult to solve. As the Lord says, even seers, the knowers of truth, get confused in this matter. Contemplation and action need not be viewed in their outward superficial aspects, as by ordinary people like Arjuna. Kṛṣṇa, with His penetrating insight into the meaning of the ideal of contemplation, says that it consists in a discriminative insight into the eternal and transient values of the spirit and the body which forms the subject-matter of the second chapter of His discourse.

The right course of action involves and presupposes the right sense of valuation, which in its turn presupposes discriminative wisdom. If it is true that the motive force of all our actions is ultimate fulfilment and happiness that is everlasting, if objects of relative and transient value cannot contribute to harmony, peace and integration, then we must develop an insight whereby we can distinguish the ephemeral and the transient from the eternal and the everlasting. Hence before we decide whether we should perform action or renounce it, we must equip ourselves with that wisdom. The path of contemplation has been adopted in the *Bhagavadgītā* only in this specific sense. It has absolutely no bearing on the renunciation of action, because the Lord has emphatically asserted that it is not in renunciation of action that actionlessness consists.³⁰⁸ Contemplation in this sense annuls the difference between *prāyṣṭi* and *nivṛtti*.

The ethical disciplines of contemplation and its practical counterpart, asceticism, are logical corollaries of the uncompromising antagonism set up by metaphysicians between the subject and the object, matter and spirit, *Brahman* and the world. The embodied human existence is the fundamental fact of human experience which cannot be rejected or brushed aside.

308. न कर्मणामनारम्भाच्चैकस्यै पुनरोऽस्तुते । *Ibid.* III. 4.

That man is an amphibian who combines in his personality both matter and spirit is the basic, unquestioned fact of experience. All the problems of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics pushed back to their extreme limits, that is to say, to their root principle, ultimately converge on the problem as to how we are to understand the relation between the subject and the object in epistemology, matter and spirit in ontology, and contemplation and action in ethics. The problems cannot be divided, and the answers given to them in one sphere cannot but bring about consequences in the remaining fields also. The theoretical and practical reason cannot be divided. How we adjust ourselves in the world in the practical sphere in our relation to our fellowmen, to the world and to God depends upon what view of the mutual relations of the subject and the object we adopt. It is all a question of attitude or of a definite point of view which we are forced to adopt after a close analysis.

Ethical problems, therefore, can ultimately be solved by an investigation of the metaphysical problem or the nature of the ultimate reality, but metaphysics or ontology is not completely *a priori* thinking. It arises from hard facts of experience, and unless we are able to understand clearly how we know and how in knowledge subject and object are related, we cannot know what the nature of reality is. So, epistemology must be the starting point of any critical enquiry into the nature of reality. All Indian schools of philosophy have endeavoured to tackle this problem, and the formulations of the nature of reality which they have put forward are in accordance with the views of knowledge they have adopted about the true relation according to them between the subject and the object.

We leave the treatment of the problem of the metaphysics of the *Bhagavadgītā* to a later stage of our argument. But for the present, it may suffice to remark that knowledge or experience is possible, only if the subject and the object, matter and mind are united in spite of their difference.

Viṣiṣṭādvaita, along with other schools of Indian thought, does not compromise on the difference of the subject and the object, of the *ātman* and the *anātman*, of spirit and matter. But it holds that there is such a relation between the two as transcends the opposition between them. According to Viṣiṣṭādvaita, the subject and the object are distinguishable in thought, but inseparable in existence. In knowledge, subject and object are united, but this is not the union of two identical things which have no difference or opposition between them. The formal laws of identity and contradiction having been exploded by the Hegelian logic, it is now recognised that the concrete facts of experience establish that things which we take, on a surface view of them, to be opposite are, in spite of their difference, united together.

There is no knowledge, therefore, in which there is any thought which is not the thought of a subject and any object which is not the object of knowledge. Knowledge is the relation between the subject and the object, and this relation implies not merely difference and opposition between them, but also the transcendence of that difference and opposition. This is the unquestionable truth with respect to the relation between them. No thinking can start without taking for granted the truth of this view. This means that the subject cannot be abstracted from the object in such a way that the object is conceived to be nothing but an idea of the subject. The existence of the object cannot be denied, or else there will be nothing for the subject to know. This leads to subjective idealism. There is a reference in all knowledge to the world or the object outside, so that the object is different from the subject. The object is not the same as an idea or a state of self-consciousness and yet, unless, in spite of its difference from the subject, it were not related to it, it would not be presented to it as an object. There is, therefore, an element in the object because of which it is united to this subject and becomes related to it in knowledge and experience.

Hence the only legitimate view that seems worth adopting as regards the problem of knowledge is that there is difference between subject and object as well as identity or unity. A true and thoroughgoing idealism must recognise the difference of the object or the mind from the subject. It is quite misleading to assert, as Russell does, that the idealist is one who denies the existence of matter: "Those who maintain that mind is the reality and matter an evil dream are called idealists."³⁰⁸

No true idealism can set up such a dualism between subject and object, between mind and matter that matter or object cannot be supposed to hold any relation with the subject. It is this failure of the recognition of the unity of mind and matter, of subject and object, that is the source of dualism between them which in its turn engenders materialistic and subjectivistic tendencies in metaphysics and ethics. Only if matter and mind, subject and object are not acknowledged to be united together, do we feel inclined to reject the claims of matter altogether or else to set up the claims of matter itself as supreme over those of mind. Materialism and hedonism, asceticism and subjectivism are the concomitant effects of one and the same error of setting up subject and object, mind and matter, thought and object as abstractions in themselves. The only way to get out of this quandary is to hold the view that the subject and the object are different and opposite principles and yet that there is a relation between them. All knowledge implies distinction, but all distinction is at the same time a relation. Hence dualism, whether in epistemology or metaphysics or in ethics, is a problem rather than a solution of a problem so common in the history of thought, Indian and Western.

It was the impelling motive of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* to resolve the sharp dualism between conflicting

³⁰⁸. *The Analysis of Mind*, quoted in S. Datta, *The Problem of Relation in Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 10.

doctrines in metaphysics and ethics which arose from looking at the nature and structure of reality from points of view which were partial and imperfect and which, while rightly looking at a part or aspect, succumbed to the error of setting it up as the whole. Only such persons as know the whole and have a comprehensive vision of reality and take into account all the sides and aspects of it in their mutual relation of difference and unity, are the real knowers of truth. In more than one place Kṛṣṇa has accentuated this truth. Once it is recognised that in the sphere of metaphysics and ethics all errors arise from identifying a part with the whole, there could be no escape from the conclusion that reality is one, integral whole: and since in human personality all the grades of reality are repeated and human nature has a complex structure, not a single element or aspect of it can be overlooked or neglected.

It is exactly this standpoint of looking at reality as a whole and taking into account this complex structure of human nature as one integral whole, that has been taught in the *Gītā* to be the ideal of contemplation. The ideals of contemplation and action are not sharply divided, because their functions are not mutually contradictory. The contemplative or the philosophical attitude towards life is restricted only to that point of view which treats all the parts, sides or aspects of reality as being at the same time both different from one another and also as unified in one whole. Their difference is as much the truth of their nature as their unified existence. It is only in this way that the theoretical and the practical teachings of the sacred text which, on a superficial view, appear to be antithetical can be reconciled. It is only such a standpoint that can fit in with the assertion at the end of each chapter which claims the work to be a science of ethics or ethical discipline in a system or a scheme of reality.³⁰⁷

The two apparently opposite principles of human conduct presuppose a certain view of human nature and of the soul. As every ideal of human conduct or that of the highest goal of human endeavour, the destiny of the individual self, is only the realisation of the already existing potentialities of the spirit which it cannot contradict, we cannot think of an ultimate fulfilment of an individual of which he is not capable, and the potentialities for which do not already exist in him. Hence if it be acknowledged that the right attitude to life which the *Bhagavadgītā* teaches is that of the performance of action with a desireless frame of mind and if it is by this course of conduct that the highest good of the self can be attained, then the grounds of such a view are to be sought in the nature of the human self. If the self is not intrinsically a dynamic principle, it is pointless to hold that only through action can perfection be attained. Further, the very nature of action is such that it is inextricably bound up with contingencies in human nature. We cannot set aside the complexity of human nature on which recent developments in psycho-analysis have thrown immense light. It is in virtue of the complexity of human nature that man is an individual. There is absolutely no meaning in propounding a doctrine of ethical discipline, if these contingencies which are the raw materials of human conduct and which are to be given a certain shape and direction by the organizing will of the individual self, are not also recognised as real. We can no longer accept the position that the self possesses a nature which we can grasp in accordance with the logical principles of identity and contradiction. The living, organic truth of the nature of the human self is far beyond the scope of understanding it in accordance with these principles.

VII. The Empirical and Transcendental Self

The commonplace error, which has been committed time and again and in which religious thinkers of very high originality and integrity still persist, is that of treating the human self as so simple an entity that it can fit in with the principles of identity

and contradiction. Thus, it is maintained that only if the self is an inactive principle, can it be held to be capable of realising perfection. For perfection itself is supposed to be a state of actionlessness or as consisting in the complete and unqualified isolation of the individual self from God, from the world and from the community of fellow selves. In other words, if perfection or the ultimate state of the human individual is something eternal, something already existing, as a potentiality in it, then it cannot be attained by action, because action belongs to the world of time, change and movement; whereas perfection belongs to the world of eternity. To hold, therefore, that perfection which is eternal can be attained by action or, for that matter, by will, is to subject oneself to a manifest contradiction. We have once again in such a view the manifest expression of the point of view of looking at elements united in a whole as mutually sundered from one another, whereas in point of fact they are always inseparable. This view gathers strength from the fact that the erroneous logic of identity and contradiction which is true only of the world of concepts³⁰⁸ has been extended also to the complex facts of human nature. As a matter of fact, the very question of perfection cannot arise, unless the complexity of human nature is not also recognised. Perfection is an essentially ethical concept and has absolutely no meaning if the human self is not intrinsically an active principle. But the preoccupation with such a wrong logic has been responsible for an utterly erroneous view in ethics. The wonder, to crown all these, is that such a view is attributed to the *Bhagavadgītā*. It has been the practice to maintain that since intrinsically and by its very nature the self is an indifferent principle of which will is no characteristic feature, it is possible for it to attain to that state of perfection which is complete withdrawal from the world and in which the soul enjoys its solitary bliss in its isolation and abstractions from all the interests of the world and from God and from the community of one's fellows.

308. See pages 223-5 *supra*.

The impulses, instincts, passions and emotions of man are as much part of the human personality as knowledge and will. Ethics is impossible, unless we give recognition to the reality of these raw materials of morality. There can be no question of perfection, the attainment of the highest good without recognition being given to the reality of these characteristic features of human personality. Any conception of man or of human nature which does away with or impairs this fundamental fact of the science of ethics is for that very reason imperfect, abstract and one-sided. Spiritual facts are not so simple as they are commonly supposed to be. The argument, therefore, that the highest good for the human self is the attainment of a state of perfection in which it enjoys solitary bliss, does not hold good if we reckon with the fact that the self is not a simple principle.

The question of conflict between the ideals of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* arises, only if we start with an unmediated dualism in human nature and hold to the position that the emotions, instincts, passions, needs and demands of the lower self form no part of the self which has consciousness for its essence. Self-consciousness itself which makes man individual, also makes him conscious of these features of it. It is wrong to hold that reason is manifested only in discovering the secrets of the outside world and not also in realising the practical ends in it. It cannot be gainsaid that it is one and the same reason that expresses itself both in discovering the world outside and in realising the practical ends in it. Hence that view of the self of man alone can be the foundation of a perfect system of ethics which recognises that there is no dualism between knowledge and will and that it is one and the same self that both knows the world through its senses and mind and also through that knowledge realises its end in it. If such a view is adopted, there cannot be any antagonism between the different sides of human nature which is the source of that sort of dualism that teaches that, unless we take the bliss of the self to be such that it is

completely emptied of its contents, we cannot think of the attainment of perfection. Such an idea of perfection cannot certainly apply to the human personality. The self is an organising principle and there is as much the element of the organisation in ordering and systematizing the desires, impulses and emotions of man in the act of knowing a thing as in realising a particular interest or end in the world outside. There is no discord, therefore, between the theoretical and practical questions concerning the knowledge of the world and the realisation of the highest ends and spiritual interests in it. It is to this central conviction, based on the nature of the human personality, that the *Bhagavadgītā* recalls us by teaching that one has to seek perfection by the performance of one's actions in a desireless frame of mind. There would certainly be no point in this teaching if such a view of human nature is utterly left out of account or cast aside or something hostile to it is maintained.

But in order to harmonize or render consistent the empty and abstract ideals of perfection with the nature of the human self, it has been the practice in both *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita* to propound such a doctrine of the human personality as attributes all agency and will paradoxically to Nature and its modes and makes the self an absolutely passive principle. There are, of course, some stanzas in the *Gītā* which on a surface view seem to endorse the passivity of the individual self and the dynamism of Nature or *prakṛti*. But such statements apparently have to be taken along with others with a positive meaning. The different conflicting statements have to be taken together and an attempt should be made to find out the truth underlying them. Fortunately, there are many other statements in the *Gītā* with clear hints as to its agency. The self has been viewed not as a principle of pure consciousness, but as a centre of both knowledge and will.

Thus it is pointless to seek the foundation of the ethics of the *Gītā* in a doctrine of the psychology of the self and of

moral action completely incompatible with it. If all movement and activity, including even that which presupposes foresight and hindsight as to the relation between the means and the ends, entirely belong to Nature, the self being an indifferent witness, the whole teaching on ethics persuading Arjuna to fight in the war on the ground that it is a righteous action, is emptied of all meaning and content. It is hence necessary before we examine the strength of this view to state in clear terms the problem itself. It is this incongruity of the dynamic ethics of the *Gītā* with the static psychology of the self that constitutes the problem.

VIII. *The Psychology of Moral Action in the 'Bhagavadgītā'*

(a) THE PROBLEM:

The contribution of the *Bhagavadgītā* to the psychology of moral action is a subject which has received little attention, even though it is universally acknowledged now that it deals mainly with the analysis of the conditions and circumstances under which action which can be designated moral in the complete sense of the term, is possible. Its main object is to show how and when any action of whatever class or category, externally viewed as high or low, can contribute to the spiritual enrichment of the human personality. Evidently, the intuitionist standard of the evaluation of the moral quality of action is rejected; and the doctrine is taught that the evaluation of any action depends on the goodness or perversity of the will that executed the act. It is therefore to the will of man that the moral quality of the action can be appropriated, and this is possible only if will is no less a feature of the *ātman* than its intelligence. That the *Gītā* teaches the art of the performance of action and not of renunciation or escape from the world and from the responsibilities devolving upon man in virtue of his spiritual apprenticeship within it, is now a settled conclusion about which there can be no doubt.

The text quite unequivocally asserts that it is only by performing our duties while in the world that we can hope to realize our supreme end and attain to perfection. Even such commentators on the *Gītā* as do not acknowledge this to be the drift of its teachings, are not slow to admit that to Arjuna and, for that matter, to all men who are not spiritually enlightened, only *karma-yoga* or the discipline of the performance of all actions with a disciplined mind can be regarded at least as conducive to the desire for spiritual enlightenment and illumination which alone is the direct means to the attainment of self-realization. This has been clearly stated to be the purport of the teachings of the *Gītā* in the introduction to his commentary on it by the great *Aśvita* teacher, Śaṅkarācārya. The assumptions, therefore, whose truth in this context can by no means be called in question and within the framework of which the teachings of the *Gītā* can be rendered coherent and clear are, in the first place, that action in all its forms is ultimately a real expression of the nature of the self, and secondly, that since the moral quality of action has to be judged by the quality of the will, it is purposive in character and cannot be attributed to non-intelligent matter. On the other hand, since matter and its modes are the necessary instruments or media through which action is expressed, we are apt to treat it as mechanical in character, the self having no part to play in its execution. The dualism of mechanical and teleological action may result in the complete evaporation of the latter, with the consequence that the spirit is likely to be understood in a manner that deprives it of all its individuality and minimizes its distinction from the atomic particles of matter.

The amalgamation of *Sāṅkhya* and *Vedānta* categories in the *Bhagavadgītā* has been responsible for a large-scale confusion as regards the true and genuine spirituality and individuality of the self. The most important expedient which the *Gītā* has adopted for its emphasis on detached action is the cultivation of the habit of thinking that all agency belongs to *prakṛti* and its *guṇas*

and that the self is a mere indifferent principle which has no will of its own, and which is not even slightly involved in any of its activities. *Sāṅkhya* distinguishes itself by depriving the self thus of all its concrete content and by attributing all activities which, in ordinary parlance, we take to be the real expression of it, to the domain of *prakṛti*. We are asked not to crave for the fruits of action, because it is not the *puruṣa* that really acts; *prakṛti* alone is the genuine agent of all our actions. The *Advaita Vedānta* argument is similar in intention, except that it repudiates the *Sāṅkhya* view that the self is the enjoyer of the fruits of its actions, even though it does not directly originate them. This is in flagrant contradiction to the unquestioned sovereignty of the law of *karma* in all the schools of Indian philosophy except that of the *Cārvāka* materialists. The repeated emphasis, therefore, which has been placed on the native passivity of the self and the activity or agency of *prakṛti* raises the question as to whether there can be any room in the *Gītā* for an intelligible, consistent and coherent psychology of morals, which can furnish a sound theoretical basis for its teachings.

Of course, philosophical problems cannot be isolated from one another, as they concern human nature and human personality in which all levels of reality are united and harmonised. One cannot thus think of the possibility of moral action in the *Gītā* if there is no warrant for its theoretical basis in its philosophical framework. Secondly, the law of *karma* which is the fundamental assumption of the conservation of moral values, breaks down, if the *Gītā* teaches that agency belongs to *prakṛti* and not to the self. Thirdly, what meaning can be assigned to the spirituality of the self, if it is merely an indifferent principle hardly distinguishable from a photographic camera? There is no doubt that in *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita* it is in terms of such metaphors and analogies that we are made to understand the indifference of the self and its transcendent purity and perfection. Finally, there is also the question of the reorientation of the exercise of intelligence and

will, which is the ineluctable assumption even of the possibility of the cultivation of the habit of thinking that it is not the self but rather *prakṛti* that acts. The Supreme Good which the *Gītā* envisages is not at all an empty and abstract ideal, so that if the nature of the finite self is conceived in such a way that it becomes the source of an unrelieved antagonism between its real nature and the destiny sought to be realized by it, then, either it would be utterly impossible for the self to attain to perfection, or else one is apt to misconceive its nature by stripping it of all its features constituting its concrete personality. There can be no dualism between the essential character of the self and the nature and content of the Supreme Good deemed its final destiny. The nature of the psychological background of the moral philosophy of the *Gītā* cannot be supposed to have left out of account the nature of the self. This inevitably leads us to think that if all these sides of the problem are critically and scrupulously examined in the light of its stanzas, it is difficult to contest the truth of the contention that its ethics is securely rooted in a kind of the psychology of the self that is not abstract and contentless and merely formal, but is rather concrete and rules out altogether the possibility of a mechanical and abstract conception. It is only such a dynamic psychology of the self that can be the theoretical basis of the ethics which teaches the consecration and sanctification rather than the negation and obliteration of our secular ideals and interests.

(b) THE MEANING OF THE DYNAMISM OF 'PRAKRITI':

Does the *Gītā*, in fact, attribute the agency of actions to the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* and not to the self which is a mere passive witness of changes taking place in its modes? Is not the self taught to be the real agent of actions? Does the *Gītā* lend support to the *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita* doctrines of the passivity of the self? It is customary to contend that there is not a single stanza which treats the self as the genuine agent of the actions that it performs. Stanzas laying stress on the

passivity of the self and the dynamism of *prakṛti* are doubtless there; on them this commonplace interpretation rests. Apart from the fact that such an explanation amounts to an oversimplification of the complex nature of the self, it must be pointed out that while *prakṛti* and its *gunas* have been held in the *Gītā* to be the real executive, the role that they play does not exclude the transcendent activity of the *puruṣa*. Many stanzas quite unequivocally assert the activity of the self and look upon it not only as the eternal, immutable principle of intelligence, but also as the source and centre and seat of all activity. In fact, the whole ethics of the *Gītā* presupposes the possession by the self of an organizing power which is the inevitable expression of its will.

Even *Sāṅkhya* involuntarily accepts the reality of will as the inalienable character of the *puruṣa*, for without it the entire process of its withdrawal from the meshes of *prakṛti* becomes an unintelligible enigma. Further, in the state of *kaivalya*, the *puruṣa* not only completely alienates itself from *prakṛti*, but is also aware of the fulfilment of its destiny. How can the *puruṣa* be felicitously conscious of its achievement of *kaivalya*, unless its alleged passivity is taken to be no more than merely a way of emphasising its transcendence of physical nature? The final consummation of this consciousness which cannot be understood except as an expression of formed will, is emphatically suggested in one of the closing verses of *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*.³⁰⁹

The *Gītā*, while expounding the doctrine of detached action, speaks from different planes of consciousness whose discrimination is indispensable for a proper understanding of its teachings. These different standpoints spring from the fact that man is a

309. एवं तत्त्वाम्यासाज्ज्ञासि न मे नाहमित्यपरिशेषम् ।

अधिपर्ययाद्विशुद्धं केवलमुत्पद्यते ज्ञानम् ॥

Sāṅkhya Kārikā, 64.

microcosm in which all the levels of reality are represented. He is an amphibian and consequently the determinism of his existence by the *gunas* of *prakṛti* is as palpable a truth of his personality as his freedom of will is the unquestioned, inalienable feature of his character. The finite self is dependent upon the sensations of his organism for the materials of its higher intellectual and spiritual life, and it is possible for it to submit to the desires, sensations and appetites of the lower sentient and vital life which thus enslave him to Nature. Under such circumstances, even though the self is active, real activity can be said to belong to *prakṛti* alone. It is not the self that acts, but it is rather Nature that works in him. Not that all this is mere mechanical activity. The truth is that the self in its real, transcendent nature is not involved in such forms of its activity as are completely determined by the *gunas* of *prakṛti*. The activity of the self is not then really free. There are many stanzas in the *Gītā* which lay stress on this determinism of Nature. This misleads us into thinking that the self is not at all the source of all these actions. If so, we cannot explain its bondage which is nothing but slavery to the senses and the ego. If it is *prakṛti* that really acts, why should the self be designated as both bound and free? The real meaning of such stanzas is that the self allows many activities to be dominated by the modes of physical nature and, when doing so, does not exhibit its freedom. It is in such contexts that the *Gītā* tells us that it is really the *gunas* that act and that we are deluded in thinking that the self acts. In other words, the self cannot appropriate to itself all such actions and their consequences as issue out of its involvement in Nature.

The pedestrian interpretation of such stanzas in terms of the complete passivity of the self as is found in both *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita* commentaries, is not supported by other statements of the Lord that emphasises its freedom as the manifestation of its formed will. Even Saṅkara has to admit that the *gunas* of *prakṛti* are merely instruments of the activity of the self and not

the real agents.³¹⁰ All such statements in the *Gītā*, therefore, as deny agency of the self, have reference to the determinism by the modes of Nature and not to its free or intrinsic or native activity in the state of its complete freedom from its meshes. It is with the intention of giving unqualified recognition to the reality of the exercise of its will, when in utter isolation and abstraction from the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, that the *Gītā* over and over again accentuates the dynamism of Nature and the passivity of the self. To infer from this that the self is a completely passive principle without will or activity has no warrant or justification. It is common knowledge, nevertheless, that in both the *Sāṅkhya* and the *Advaita Vedānta* of Śaṅkara analogies have been employed to suggest the unqualified passivity of the self. Imperviously entrenched in the logic of abstract identity, they cannot think of the coherence of the liberation of the individual with its activity. The self is stated to be free only if it is, in its essence, actionless: the possibility of detached action is said to arise only if, in its real nature, the self is not an agent.³¹¹

The *Gītā* leaves no doubt about the reality of will or action constituting an inseparable feature of the nature of the self. The lower dimension of its activity may not be free, being dominated by appetites and instincts or the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*; but in the higher plane of its existence which is expressed in a radically new spiritual orientation, it does not enslave itself to egoism and selfishness, and even though

310. (i) गुणाः करणात्मकाः ।

Śaṅkara's Commentary on *Bhagavadgītā*.

(ii) करणं क्रियते अनेन इति बाह्यं श्रोत्रादि अन्तस्स्थं बुद्ध्यादि ।

Ibid. XVIII. 18.

311. यो हि कर्ता सः कर्मफलेन लिप्यते, अयं त्वकर्ता मतः न लिप्यते ।

Ibid. XIII. 31.

performing all actions and being their agent, lay claim to the appropriation of its rewards. There is no point in the assertion that the false sense of egoism and attachment to the fruits of actions has to be abandoned, if the will of the self is in no way involved in them.³¹²

Hence, to attribute will to *buddhi* or understand it in terms of physical categories is wrong. It seems sheer anthropomorphism to attribute activity which is the characteristic of life and consciousness to physical nature or to causal relations.

Even the severe, cold intellectualism of *Sāṅkhya* is unintelligible without the recognition of will or activity as the essential character of the self. There is no evidence in our experience of pure consciousness, absolutely immune from feeling and activity. Neither *Sāṅkhya* nor *Advaita* has been able to prove the existence of pure consciousness. It is ideal and not actual. *Sāṅkhya* cannot prove the existence of *puruṣa* without assuming its concrete personality.³¹³ Nor is *prakṛti* the agent of actions without its proximity with the *puruṣa*. The repudiation of the agency of the self points only to its dependence for its activity upon the modes of *prakṛti*, but it does not amount to the negation of will as the essence of the self along with its intelligence. The affirmation of the reality of the human personality is the underlying assumption of its repudiation. Śaṅkara presupposes its reality in his attack on *Sāṅkhya* metaphysics. The notion of an abstract self, therefore, cannot be substantiated.

312. क्रियमाणेष्वेव कर्मसु कर्तृत्वाद्विपरित्यागदशात्प्रसिद्धस्त्वेत्यासः ।

Ramānuja's commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, XVIII, 12.

313. संघातपरार्थत्वात् त्रिगुणादिविपर्ययादधिष्ठानात् ।

पुरुषोऽस्ति भोक्तृभावात्कैवल्यार्थं प्रवृत्तेः ॥

Sāṅkhya Kārikā, 17.

The notion of a self, abstract in character and destitute of all concrete contents, is alien to the moral psychology of the *Gītā*. According to Kṛṣṇa, the self is a centre of both intelligence and will for which it no doubt needs the aid of the mind, the ego, the senses and the intellect. But they are its instruments and not the real agents of actions.

(c) THE FREE AGENCY OF THE SELF :

The *Gītā* supports in no uncertain terms the doctrine of transcendent activity as the characteristic of the self. It categorically asserts that the self is an agent and makes distinction between the doer and the instrument of action.³¹⁴ Such a qualification of the agency of *prakṛti* is necessary to forestall the misconception that the *puruṣa* is subject to the experience of pleasures and pains, even though actions are not performed by it.³¹⁵ The *Gītā* not only gives cosmic significance and importance to action by declaring that it is the principle which has set the wheel of creation itself into movement and has originated from *Brahman*, but even emphatically asserts that it is never possible for an embodied being to abandon all his actions. One would not be able even to maintain one's existence without action even for a moment. This repeated emphasis on the performance of action so long as one lives is pointless, if the self is not really the originator of its actions and it is physical nature alone that is behind all changes and movements. A hierarchical order of the types of actions and their agents is outlined. At the apex is the individual who is completely free from any the least attachment to the fruits of his actions and has renounced his ego and is yet engaged in doing all his works with full vigour and enthusiasm, unmoved by success or failure. In all such statements the *Gītā* evidently

314. *Bhagavadgītā*, XVIII. 14.

315. *Ibid.* XIII. 21.

calls us to a higher altitude of our spiritual experience which presupposes not the extinction of our will and power, but their sanctification and consecration. The agent has to feel all the while as part of his settled habit of thinking that, although it is he who works, in point of fact God works through him.³¹⁶

Therefore, it follows that for the *Gita* the self is not a mere passive witness, a silent or indifferent spectator of all its changing states, but that it is directly involved in all actions. It needs instruments to act, and since it depends upon them, we can only in a qualified sense say that it is not the total or sole explanation of whatever it does. Just as in the case of a seed developing into a tree, the usual requisite conditions, namely, the rays of the sun, water and soil, are effective only in proportion to its own intrinsic potency, even so the *Gita* teaches that *prakṛti* and its modes are only the conditions required for the expression of the activity of the self. This is made clear in a verse which says that one who considers, on taking all these conditions into account, the self alone to be the exclusive source of action, is not able to see the truth, as his vision is not all-comprehensive. Again the *Gita* stresses the need for the training and the discipline of the will of the individual to bring about a radical change in unregenerate ways of thinking and living. Thus it says that it is by the self that one is able to elevate oneself and that whether a man is his own friend or foe depends upon how he conquers his self by himself.³¹⁷

All this makes it clear that there are two levels of consciousness from which the author of *Gita* speaks. In our ordinary normal consciousness, when we are slaves of our senses, mind and intellect, we are advised to withdraw ourselves from

316. Cf. "I live, not yet I, but Christ liveth in me"—*The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians*, II. 20.

317. *Bhagavadgītā*, VI. 5.

them by being reminded that we are not in the least involved in them. But this is not the denial of such intrinsic native activity of the self free from the dominion of Nature on it, as is always active in the man of superior intelligence and will.

(d) THE SUPREME GOOD AND THE NATURE OF MAN :

The method which oversimplifies the nature of the self and thus creates a wide gulf between it and the Supreme Good which it seeks to realise, is thus seen to be barren. How does the *Bhagavadgītā* understand the nature of the Supreme Good? The dominant note of its ethics is integration, synthesis, moderation and harmony, and not the pessimistic and ascetic denial, suppression or extinction of our lower instincts, appetites, desires, impulses and ambitions. The rule in the theoretical as well as the practical sphere is that the higher transcends the lower, by including and not by negating it. Hence in any adequate conception of the Supreme Good, we have to take into account the total self and not only a fragment of it. The unity of the self must be acknowledged to realise its presence in all its forms and changes. In our ordinary understanding of our spiritual life, we are accustomed to think that its elements are only externally related to one another, so that the result of pressing this point of view to its necessary consequences is that the self is virtually made no more than a principle of formal unity isolated from the differences of its manifestation. We make the mistake of thinking that our appetites and desires, emotions and passions form no part of our being and that consequently our moral breakdown or decline is accounted for in terms of an alien principle or power. The truth is that these emotions and passions, in spite being called irrational, are rational in a higher sense than is generally understood. For they also are expressions of our reason, as they are its perversions and determine the rational self in a certain way.

Hence, in the conception of the Supreme Good, we cannot think of watertight compartments for that which rules and

governs and the powers and impulses that are regulated and controlled by it. The intimate and close relation of form and matter cannot be left out of account. Both belong to the same self.

In the notion of the Supreme Good, therefore, there is no warrant for dividing the functions of reason from those of will. They must be taken to be complementary aspects of the same principle. The nature of the Supreme Good must be conceived in conformity with and in obedience to the demands of the real character of the self. The self seeks its fulfilment in it and realises that principle as its highest good which is in consonance with its essence. There is no doubt that the self-conscious being does not seek to satisfy his desires and passions as such, but only as part of his Supreme Good or perfect fulfilment. The Supreme Good cannot therefore be identified only with a component or constituent of it, but with all the elements within it which can ideally be separated but, in point of fact, are always inseparable.

The Supreme Good as envisaged in the *Bhagavadgītā* gives full recognition to this truth by providing room in its conception even for the lower appetites and feelings in the framework of its psychology. It attempts to steer a middle course between the romantic pursuit of sensuous pleasures and the ascetic mortification of our impulses and appetites. "But a man of disciplined mind, who moves among the objects of sense, with the senses under control and free from attachment and aversion, he attains purity of spirit".³¹⁸ Thus, according to the ethics taught herein, our instincts and appetites are also part of our spiritual life and, when we are dominated by them, we cannot say we are swayed by a principle alien to us. The conflict of reason and passion, therefore, is not something thrust upon the self from outside, but is part rather of its spiritual constitution. The division and conflict of reason and passion with

which moral life starts and the conquest of passion in which it fulfils itself, have both to be rendered intelligible by reference to the same self in terms of the principle of development and of the relation of the lower to the higher.

Consequently, the nature of the self cannot be understood by abstracting from it all its contents as in *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita*. It is certainly an over-simplification of the complex nature and constitution of the spiritual life of man to hold that *mokṣa* is impossible of achievement, unless the self is conceived to be a principle of mere passive intelligence. The kind of psychology that falls back upon to this mode of reasoning springs from an unrealistic understanding of the nature of the self, cutting it off from its real expressions and manifestations in normal consciousness. We cannot cast aside these to grasp the meaning and full implication of both the self and the Highest Good that it seeks consciously or unconsciously to realise. It is such a psychology of morals and of the Highest Good in accordance with it that must be considered to be the contribution of the *Bhagavadgītā* to Indian ethical thought. And it is definitely an advance of no mean order on the moral philosophy of both *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita*.

Hence in the *Gītā* there is neither any fundamental opposition between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*, nor any unbridgeable chasm between its ethics and metaphysics. Any interpretation of its teachings which, on the one hand, tells us that it advances activist ethics and on the other sets up the doctrine of the self as a passive principle, cannot be taken to represent its true spirit.

IX. General Nature of the Metaphysics of the 'Bhagavadgītā'

Suggestions about the nature and structure of reality which the ethics presupposes, have already been given. The question is: if the view of ethics which the *Bhagavadgītā* advances and

of which we have given a fairly detailed account were true, what sort of metaphysics could be held to be its foundation? It has been our contention that ethical interests can be safeguarded only if the basic presuppositions of rational theism are true. If the inseparable relation between ethics and metaphysics cannot be questioned, then it must be admitted that only in a scheme of thinking in which the reality of man, the world and God is accepted, can the validity of moral experience be vindicated. All the three principles are necessary, if ethical experience, as it takes place, is true.

Viśiṣṭādvaita is distinguished from other *Vedāntic* systems of thought in holding that while God is the Supreme Reality, the individual self and the world are also real. Viśiṣṭādvaita, no less than *Advaita*, upholds the doctrine that ultimate reality is to be sought in a principle of unity which has its centre of thought and action in itself. The universe, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, is to be explained in terms of one spiritual principle of self-consciousness which explains all order, system, harmony and coherence. The *Advaita Vedānta* of Śaṅkarācārya also maintains that *Brahman* is the ultimate reality and that all things and beings in the universe are to be traced back ultimately to *Brahman*. Finite individuals and the material reality of which the world is constituted are, however, products of ignorance. Their existence is temporary, because they last only so long as the individual is subject to ignorance and *Brahman* is the victim of *māyā*. *Advaita* is not pantheism in the sense that it makes the existence of God co-extensive with the universe, so that it is completely exhausted in the world. Nor is it analogous with the system of Spinoza whose philosophy is the crucial example of the identification of God and the world to the extent that both these terms are held to be the designations of one and the same reality. God and the world in his view are, as it were, the converse and concave of one and the same object. Spinoza has given many similes in illustration. But *Advaita* does not identify *Brahman* with the world. The existence of the world is

explained away, on the ground that the perception of all plurality and difference and of time and change is due to ignorance. In Buddhism, such perception is due to beginningless *vāsanās* and in *Advaita* to ignorance. The world has temporary existence in the same way in which, for example, magical creations are projected by an expert magician. Śaṅkarācārya has illustrated the apparent reality of the world with the help of his simile of the magician.

The denial of the reality of the world is common to both Buddhism and *Advaita*. The only point in which the latter differs from Buddhism is in holding that *Brahman* is the basis of this illusory projection of the world. For Buddhism there is no ground or basis for the appearance of the world, it being the product of the subjective propensities or *vāsanās* of the individual. *Advaita* would trace it back to the delusive power which *Brahman* possesses and to which He as it were falls a victim Himself. Hence *Advaita* is pantheism in the sense that for it *Brahman* is the only reality. It cancels the separate reality of the world. Even the reality of the finite individual self is held to be prejudicial to the integrity and identity of *Brahman*. The individual, in other words, is a false appearance of *Brahman*. All reality from *Saguṇa Brahman* to the telegraph post is the product of *māyā* or *avidyā* which ultimately is destroyed by spiritual wisdom. Viśiṣṭādvaita does not reject the reality of the individual self and of the world. Its thinkers do not admit that there is any incongruity or contradiction in holding that while *Brahman* is the Supreme Reality, the individual self and the world also are real, because human experience itself cannot be understood without the acknowledgment of the reality of the individual self and of the world. The subject and the object are the two indispensable elements of human experience and, therefore, if experience is what it is and if any conception of what ultimate reality is, can be formed, we cannot deny, but have to accept the reality of the subject and the object. Maybe, they are not as real and as perfect as *Brahman* Himself is. Yet

that they possess existence cannot be denied. Hence, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, *Brahman*, the Supreme Reality, is qualified by the conscious self and the non-intelligent matter or *prakṛti*. *Brahman*, the conscious self and the non-intelligent *prakṛti* are inseparably related together, though they can be distinguished from one another.

Theism is the doctrine which gives recognition to the reality of God, the world and man. It holds further that God is the immanent principle in both the world and the individual self. According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, God is the inner controller of both Nature and history. Viśiṣṭādvaita does not insist on the distinction of value between God and Nature and history. All the three have existence and reality, though God is the Supreme Reality. To hold that the individual self and the world do not possess the same status, as God does, is not to hold that just because they are not what God is, they must be mere false appearances.

The *Dvaita* philosophy of Madhvacarya, on the other hand, maintains absolute difference between God, man and the world. *Dvaita* is the doctrine of unqualified difference. The five distinctions between God and the self, between God and the world, between the different individual selves, between the self and the world and between the objects of the world are fundamental to this school³¹⁹. Although Madhvacarya is no less emphatic than Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita on the unity of *Brahman*, holding that *Brahman* is the ultimate reality, he maintains that God and the world and the individual self are absolutely different from one another. This is how his philosophy becomes

319. जीवेश्वरमिदं खलु जडेश्वरमिदं तथा ।

जीवमेदो मिथश्चैव जडजीवमिदं तथा ॥

मिथश्च जडमेदो यः प्रपञ्चो मेदपञ्चकः ।

सोऽयं सत्परोऽप्यनादिश्च सान्विशेषाशमाप्नुयात् ॥

Sarvadarśanasamgraha, p. 142.

pluralistic realism, though it is monotheistic because all things are dependent upon God. Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy differs from *Advaita* on the one hand and *Dvaita* on the other in mediating between absolute identity and absolute difference. Viśiṣṭādvaita is nearer to *Dvaita* than to *Advaita* in recognizing the reality of plurality and difference. It also holds that the three principles are ontologically different from one another. It teaches nevertheless that, though distinct, they are inseparable and *Brahman* is the inner controller and ruler of both of them. Hence Viśiṣṭādvaita adheres to the true principle of theism in connecting all reality with *Brahman*.

God is personal and is even maintained to be higher than *Brahman*, the impersonal being.³²⁰ The author of the *Bhagavadgītā* is conscious of the monistic doctrine according to which individual selves and the world and all plurality and difference in it can be traced to one impersonal principle of pure consciousness. It is such a conception of *Brahman* that the *Bhagavadgītā* quite unequivocally declares to be unsuitable for that conscious relationship between God and man which we designate as religion. The assumed superiority of this impersonal principle to personal God prompted Arjuna's question in the 12th chapter as to which of the two aspirants is superior to the other, one who is given to contemplative meditation upon God as an abstract being or one who looks upon Him not only as the ultimate and final source of all beings, but also as one who possesses all perfections, who rules the universe by His logos or reason and who has sovereignty and goodness through which He creates the universe and maintains it. The Lord has voted in favour of the latter conception of God. This in itself is enough to decide in which direction, whether towards non-theistic monism or to personal theism, the argument of the *Gītā* leads, not to speak of the many stanzas endorsing personal theism. The relation that holds good

320. *Bhagavadgītā*, XIV. 27.

between God and man is like that which obtains between one individual human being and another. Knowledge of God is not like that of an object which we come to know with the assistance of impersonal categories. Knowledge of persons is different from knowledge of things, and in the *Bhagavadgītā* it is the former that counts and supplies the foundation stone of the religious relationship.

As to the requirements of personal theism, it is not only the doctrine of the absolute being as self-determining and self-manifesting that is set before us by Kṛṣṇa. The individual self is also acknowledged to be real. His centre of unity is in himself, because of which he has an individual centre of knowledge and activity. Hence, the ontology here safeguards the individuality and freedom of the individual self. Ethical freedom presupposes individual freedom. Individuality is not a figment or fiction of *avidyā* or *māyā*. The Lord explicitly teaches that individual selves are eternal and real. Rāmaṇuja in his commentary on the *Gītā* points out that it is by no means the intention of this scripture to teach that individuality is the product of delusion.

Ethics presupposes the reality of the principle of individuality. If there are no real centres of activity with independence of will and if it is the same Absolute that is at work in all the individual souls; if their distinctions are caused by *upādhis* and they are therefore not different from one another: then they cannot be responsible for their individual actions because their acts are ultimately the acts of *Brahman*. The ontological differences of individuals cannot be mere false appearances, if moral values and distinctions and moral responsibility are real experiences. It is of no help to say that the empirical reality of individual selves can explain moral distinctions. For, in this sphere, recourse to the difference of empirical and transcendental truth or reality is unavailing. "When knowledge of identity contradicts and cancels the knowledge of difference, the latter,

even though continuing to persist, having for its object something false the nature of which has already been ascertained, cannot be an occasion or provide scope for engagement in the acts of teaching etc.”³²¹ Water in the mirage does not prompt one to take water from it. Hence if we start with the reality of moral experience and moral distinctions, then the reality of individual selves as separate and independent centres of activity cannot be regarded as a mere product of false knowledge.

Thus, the individuality and freedom of the finite self are the very fundamental assumptions with which the discourse of the *Bhagavadgītā* on the ethical life of constant activity in a desireless frame of mind makes a beginning. It seems to be taken for granted that the immortality of the individual self involves as its necessary logical consequence both its individuality and freedom of will. The universe is the field of the moral evolution of the individual self, and this has been emphatically asserted by the Lord who says that the very source of creation is action.³²² The individual is a centre of both knowledge and will, and because he has will he is not only distinct from the Lord of all, but also from all other individuals. Hence it follows that both the world in which action is performed and the individual self for which the world is a means to its moral evolution must be real and not a mere projection of the delusive *māyā* of *Brahman*.

Both *prakṛti* and the finite self are taken to be eternal. But the modes of *prakṛti* are perishable. This, however, is no bar to their recognition as real, because Rāmānujācārya shows that

321. एवमत्राप्यद्वैतज्ञानेन बाधितं मेदृक्ज्ञानमनुवर्तमानमपि मिथ्यार्थ-
विषयत्वनिश्चयार्त् नोपदेशादिप्रवृत्तिहेतुर्भवति ।

Rāmānuja's Commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, II. 12.

322. विसर्गः कर्मसंश्रितः । *Bhagavadgītā*, VIII, 3.

what makes a thing real is not necessarily its freedom from its contradiction, but rather its being an object of valid knowledge. *Prakṛti*, which is the original source and seat of all movement and change in it, and its perishable modes are all real, because they are objects of valid knowledge. The fact that they pass from one state to another and are changing every moment, does not prove that they are false, but only suggests that they are restless, that they are meant for something else and that their meaning cannot be found in themselves. Thus, a clear and sharp distinction has been drawn between matter or Nature and all the modifications of it on the one hand and the individual self on the other. "Know both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* to be beginningless and all the *guṇas* and the modes of *prakṛti* to be born of it".³²³ The *Bhagavadgītā* speaks of the two *prakṛtis* of the Lord, the lower and the higher. The former has been declared to be constituted of the earth, water, fire, air and ether, that is to say, the five subtle elements, the mind, the reason and individuation, [distinguishable from the higher *prakṛti* which is the individual self and which is higher because it sustains the whole universe].³²⁴ Thus, the individual self is the sustaining and animating principle of the non-intelligent, inanimate Nature or the world.

These two principles of matter and conscious individual self are both real, but the *Gītā* does not accept the dualism of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. Both of them are distinct and opposite, but their difference and opposition are resolved in the unity of *Brahman* of whom they are both said to be the powers. Nowhere is there any suggestion that they are merely manifestations or expressions of *Brahman* or God. In fact, it is made clear that through Nature and history God expresses Himself. It is because of the fact that they are the *prakṛti*,

323. *Ibid.* XIII. 19.

324. *Ibid.* VII. 4-5.

that is, the media or instruments, of the manifestation of His power and glory, that God is immanent in them through His majesty. He transcends their opposition and difference. The whole universe has been declared to have its source and end in God. It follows that while God transcends matter and the spirit, there is nothing that transcends God Himself. This means that God is the ultimate reality. There is not the slightest hint as to the illusory character of the individual self and the material world. On the contrary, all things and beings are included in Him as are the several beads strung on a string.³²⁵

The world of space, time and causation is not false or unreal, but is the product of the evolution of *prakṛti* which is ceaselessly at work, not independently of God but under His constant control and guidance.³²⁶ The dualism of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* is subordinated to the supremacy of God. It is the power or the spirit of God which is in operation in all the objects of the universe. The suggestion has been very effectively made in the seventh chapter that God is the essence of all things and that it is due to His power and will which is constantly at work in them that all the objects of the universe possess their nature and perform their functions. Kṛṣṇa is earnest in impressing upon Arjuna His omnipresence in all things. Thus nothing in the universe can claim existence in independence of God and even the independence of the individual soul is relative. Absolute freedom belongs to God alone. But individual souls also are free agents of their actions. The actions performed by them can be classed as good or bad, because of the freedom of choice which they possess and exercise in expressing through them their desire and will.

325. *Ibid.* VII. 7.

326. मयाचक्षेण प्रकृतिः सृयते सचराचरम् ।

Ibid., IX. 10.

There is, however, no contradiction between the absolute freedom and independence of God and the relative independence that the individual soul enjoys. Rāmānuja has reconciled the freedom and independence of the individual soul with the omnipotence and supremacy of God by holding that if God exists, man's freedom can be limited, but not annihilated. But God's omnipotence is no hindrance to man's relative freedom. Rāmānuja reconciles the two by holding that even though the power of free activity is God's endowment, the individual is free to act. God only permits or persuades, but does not coerce. Further, God always depends upon the free efforts of individuals in the matter of dispensing rewards and punishments to them according to their moral deserts.

Rāmānuja puts the matter thus : " It is the Supreme Lord that endows the individual self with the senses, the body and such other things ; it is He who is their support and it is from Him that they derive their power. Yet, even though having their support in Him and their power also derived from Him, they make their own efforts out of their own free will for the performance of work by directing the senses and other things. The Supreme Lord, immanent in him, only causes him to act, that is to say, He only permits him to act. The individual self is himself, out of his free will, the cause of his work."³²⁷

The word 'māyā' occurs in the *Bhagavadgītā*, but it does not carry the suggestion of the falsity of the world. *Māyā* is the creative power through which God creates the world. Since God is the Ultimate Reality to whom nothing can be added from outside and since everything that exists must spring from Him, God can express Himself only by giving Himself : and creation is treated not only as the means for the moral and spiritual education of mankind, but also as the expression of God's

327. Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, XVII. 14-15.

creative activity. This attitude makes it clear that the world has inseparable relation with the Absolute. If God is the name we give to the Ultimate Reality, then, not only all reality must be traced back to Him, but it must also be held to be flowing from Him. The problem of God cannot be conceived to be a one-sided affair, so that while all reality can be said to be due to Him, it may be so isolated or separated from Him that either we may not feel in the long run the necessity of accepting the reality and existence of God, or we may even hold consequently that the perception of difference is a false fabric of our own delusion or imagination.

In the *Bhagavadgītā* the world has been declared to be the real manifestation of the nature of God. He is always concerned about it. The attitude entrenched in the belief that it is false and that it is without any ruler behind it has been condemned as the view held by persons with a demoniac mentality. Just because the world is by no means a mechanical dance of atoms or the product of matter and motion, it cannot be said to be without any purpose or goal. God is the Supreme Directive Intelligence who not only creates the world but is its inner controller or ruler, being the source of the inspiration and guidance of all its movements. That gulf between eternity and time, being and becoming is not maintained, which is the characteristic feature of all pantheistic or dualistic systems of thought. "Time", as Plato said, "is the moving image of eternity". Being expresses itself only through becoming; we cannot keep eternity and time in watertight compartments, so that on the one extreme we have being and on the other illusion. Neither can we accept that mere flux and movement is the essence of reality, nor that being has self-contained and self-complete existence, so that becoming on this count comes to claim absolute reality. The *Gītā* view of the world steers a middle course between the pantheistic denial of the reality of all change and movement and the realistic affirmation of the reality of nothing but change and movement. In other words, the

concepts of Eleatic Being and of Heraclitean flux or of the Bergsonian change and movement are held to be only partial expressions of the truth in this matter, because reality is both being and becoming, if change is the movement of something that is changeless. It is only the changeless that can change. It is something static that alone can move and that which we call immutable or being we can know only through its manifestations, activity or movement. As a matter of fact, as Plato said, of what is momentary and transient we can have absolutely no knowledge at all.

There has been emphasis in contemporary thought on the recognition of the absolute reality of time, change and movement to such an extent that in the philosophy of Alexander even God has been held to be its product. In other words, God for Alexander is yet to be born. And when He 'emerges', because of entropy in the universe He will be under sentence of death, dying when the universe runs down to a state of equal distribution of energy. Such entanglement of God in time and change amounts to denying Him, because if He is the ultimate source of all being, then He must be the background and source of all movement, rather than the product, yet to be born, of the world process.

"This theory, avowed by many philosophers and accepted though not emphasised by many others," comments Dean Inge, "is far from satisfying the religious consciousness. Even if we could believe that the good was on its way towards a complete victory in Time, that would not content us. The object of our worship 'sitteth above the waterflood and remaineth a king for ever'. 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, thou art God from everlasting and world without end.'"³²⁸

In the *Gītā* all oppositions of thought and all distinctions are only relative and not absolute. It affirms that there is no radical dualism between time and eternity. It treats both these concepts as mutually implicative, in so far as eternity, if at all it has any meaning, can be expressed only in time and it is only from time again that we can form any conception of what eternity is. Because of this synthetic and broad outlook of treating all differences of thought and reality as only relative differences, we have no separation of either God from the world or the world from God. The pantheistic error of making the distinction between God in Himself and God in relation to the world has not been committed. If God is Ultimate Reality in the true sense of the term, and if we have to treat Him not only as the source of all reality, but also as perfect and as being at least of the nature of the self of which we have the highest expression in the human personality, then there is no warrant for making any distinction between God in Himself and God in relation to the world. It is the same knowledge and will by which God knows Himself and by which also He creates and knows of the world. The *Gītā* does not countenance a static view of the nature of the Deity. We may ideally think of God as complete in Himself and as desiring nothing from outside to overcome any imperfection or want in Him. God is complete fullness and as Plato said, since He is good and there is nothing of which He is jealous, eternal expression and activity by giving of His own self in the world must be acknowledged to be His very nature. There is no ontological difference, therefore, set up in the *Bhagavadgītā* between the Absolute of philosophy and God of religion. The world is the expression of His constant activity and His interest in its welfare. Though God is beyond history, He enters into history to safeguard the rule of law and the kingdom of righteousness.

God is the self-manifesting and self-determining reality and everything is the expression of His power. *Māyā* is connotative of the power of individuation or self-limitation in God. It is

the expression of His nature rather than an obscuring or delusive agency which erects a barrier between us and God. While, on the one hand, the *Gita* definitely means by the term, '*māyā*', that God possesses the power of self-limitation, on the other hand it also employs it in the sense of the subjective ignorance of the individual. The immensity and unfathomable mystery of the being of God is not incompatible with the ignorance of the individual.

'*Māyā*' means primarily unlimited fecundity, that is, infinite capacity for creation, expression and revelation. In the sense in which we speak of it in relation to God, it cannot be conceived to be an objective reality bringing about any limitation on Him, so that God possessing it as His power can be taken to be a reality inferior in grade to the Ultimate Reality without this power. *Māyā* is the positive counterpart of the negative ignorance of the individual. Our ignorance of the Ultimate Reality, or for that matter, of the nature and power of God is in proportion to our finitude: we are not able to comprehend Him completely. However much our comprehension of Him may advance, we still fall infinitely short of an exhaustive knowledge of Him. It is in this sense that we can all be called victims of *māyā*. The immensity of the being of God and the ignorance of the individual are the positive and negative counterparts of one and the same fact of our spiritual experience. Further, knowledge and comprehension of God is bound to express itself in a corresponding transformation and purification in the human personality. There is no knowledge which does not at the same time point to the subjective element in the self of man. All objective knowledge of things involves a certain amount of freedom from prejudices and passions. Complete and adequate knowledge of anything demands a proportionate freedom in the individual from the passions and prejudices which hinder establishment of right relationship with it. Hence if we are required to know anything, we are obliged just for this purpose to emancipate ourselves from all our

prejudices and passions. *Māyā*, as ignorance, means in the *Bhagavadgītā* just this slavery to our lower self, which stands between God and man and obstructs establishment of the right relationship with Him.

The word '*māyā*' has occurred so many times in the course of the text with these two explicit connotations that there does not seem to be any basis for interpreting it in any other sense than what follows from the infinitude of God on the one hand and the finitude of man on the other. Both these meanings are expressions of one and the same fact, there is no opposition between them and we need not bring in any suggestion of the falsity of the world or obscuration of the nature of God. To hold that God is Himself a victim to any reality from outside because of which it is not possible for us to know Him in His true essence and character amounts, as a matter of fact, to landing us in an irreconcilable dualism. If God is the Ultimate Reality which is spiritual in nature and to which all things can be traced back, He can be said to be revealed in them rather than obscured by them. To explain the ignorance of the individual, which is the inevitable consequence of his finitude, by falling back upon an agency from outside the being of both God and man, results in making them the eternal victims to it—from which flow the heresies and extravaganees of scepticism and agnosticism.

The metaphysics of the *Gītā* maintains a direct relationship between God and the world on the one hand and God and man on the other. *Māyā* is not the principle of negativity at all. It is the mediating principle between eternity and time and points on the one hand to the reality of time, change and history and on the other to the eternal, permanent background of all movement and activity in the universe.³²⁹ Hence it is an expression of the glory

329. *Ibid.* IX. 10.

of God, as all things are revelation of it. The Lord goes to the extent of saying that whatever power and splendour is seen in the universe should be acknowledged to have sprung from His brilliance.³³⁰ There is absolutely no strength in the argument of atheistic monism that *māyā* in the *Bhagavadgita* stands for the element of negativity in the being of God. If the revelation and expression of God in the world does not bring about any addition to His being, neither does it involve any diminution of it. Hence, the view which holds that the concept of *māyā* here is an indication of the diminution of His being involved in His creative activity, is completely untenable.

X. Freedom and Grace

The treatment of the nature of God invariably lays stress on His self-determining and self-revealing character. God is the supreme personal ethical will who is not only the first and the final cause of the universe, but is also responsible for the maintenance of moral law. The *Gita* lays emphasis also on the grace of God. The individuality and freedom of man are values that it safeguards by teaching that there is a sort of ethical determinism between the actions he performs and the results that follow from them. The individuality of the finite self and the good or bad actions that it performs are both the correlative and constitutive elements of its spiritual character. Spirituality means individuality and freedom. But freedom is the same as the undetermined capacity and the will for the performance of any action. Though it is true that one is free in the performance of one's action, it cannot be gainsaid that the good or bad results of the actions one performs must recoil on the agent of those actions. There is a sort of necessity in the kind of actions performed by us by which they are accompanied by the results they produce. A distinction is made between actions

that are *sāttvika*, *rajasa* and *tāmasa*, and it is taught that they are accompanied by corresponding consequences. Everybody is in this way subject to the inexorable iron law of necessity, so far as the relation between actions performed and the consequences reaped is concerned.

But the *Gītā* introduces also the conception of Divine Grace. Grace has no place in atheistic monism, which is incompatible with God as the supreme personal ethical will. The relation between God and man are drastically altered by the conception of God that we uphold. The common usage of the very term, 'God', precludes the possibility of approving of a doctrine of Ultimate Reality other than that which holds it to be personal. Grace has the connotation of that sort of relationship which can hold good only between persons. God is personal ethical will and individuals with their independence and freedom are also personal in character. Of persons of even the most despicable conduct the *Gītā* declares that, once there is a transformation in their mental outlook with the awakening of the spark of divinity in them, the grace of God begins its operation in elevating them to higher and higher levels of moral perfection and purity. Hence, while the initiative comes first from the individual, God fulfils it in enabling him to make spiritual progress.

Individual freedom, the foundation and presupposition of moral conduct, is the most outstanding element contributing to the dignity of man as a responsible person. Freedom does not belong to stones or to inorganic matter, nor can it be said to be the characteristic feature of levels of beings lower than man. Freedom is necessarily involved in the conception of man with his essence in self-consciousness. If he has the freedom to think of before and after, and if he is always conscious of what he is doing, he must have a free choice of doing anything even otherwise than he elects to do. Even if there are circumstances and forces beyond his control, he acts as though his action

flowed from his own freedom. It is because of the individuality and freedom he possesses that his dignity is infinitely enhanced. He is hence rightly considered to be superior to the lower levels of reality which are under the dominance of circumstances and conditions which constitute their being and of the difference of which from their own being, they do not have even the slightest consciousness. In the animal and the plant world, for example, we cannot find freedom to be the essence of their being. Save and except for reacting in manifold ways mechanically or instinctively to the influence of external forces and circumstances, they do not give us any evidence of any activity in them which springs from a centre of unity which belongs to the inner side of their nature.

As John Hick observes: "It is written into the constitution of human nature that the ultimate I, the 'pure ego', is for ever inaccessible to others. As an item in the physical world, a person can be pushed around by superior force; but in the inner recesses of his personality, he is not thus manipulatable. He can be coerced into outward conformity but not into inward assent".³³¹ It is this element of incommunicable freedom that confers on man his sovereignty over all other forms of being. His special prerogative in contrast to the plant and the animal world is to possess the element of spiritual unity which supersedes and overpowers the determinism of external forces and circumstances.

The Lord, at the close of His discourse, explicitly and categorically declares that even though He has explained every aspect of the moral problem which has been agitating Arjuna's mind and even though there is no ambiguity as to what should be done, he is free to conduct himself as he desires.³³²

331. *Faith and Knowledge*, pp. 130-131.

332. *Bhagavadgita*, XVIII. 61.

The *Gītā* does not deny that there is an element of necessity in human nature inasmuch man as an embodied being is part of Nature as well and the necessity of it must drag him in an opposite direction to that of his own will. It is pointed out that men follow their own nature, and control and suppression of it is quite unavailing. "Even the wise man acts according to the natural inclinations and tendencies of his nature; all beings act according to their respective idiosyncracies. In such circumstances, how can any restraint, control or pressure be of any avail."³³³ Not only is there according to the *Gītā* the determinism of one's own nature, but there is even the inexorable law of determinism between the senses and their objects which is fixed and final: and one cannot get out of the circle of this mechanical causation of the senses and their objects. Kṛṣṇa takes account of the element of this determinism as forming part of human personality itself in so far as his affiliation to Nature cannot be set aside as long as man is an embodied being. Further, man is inextricably bound up with Nature and enjoys the *guṇas* born of *prakṛti*; it is this conjunction of the *guṇas* with the individual self that is the cause for its birth in lower or higher, good or bad orders of being.³³⁴ The *puruṣa* and the *prakṛti* with its *guṇas* are thus always joined with each other.³³⁵

Man is an amphibious being who is not only bound up with Nature and the realm of necessity, but is also a spark of the divine. If the *Gītā* tells us on the one hand that human existence is constituted by a material environment, it also teaches us on the other hand that the spirit within is the truth of his being in virtue of which he is the spectator of all time and existence. A call is given to rise to that height of freedom and spiritual perfection and blessedness which belongs to man in virtue of his being essentially a spiritual being. Necessity and determinism

333. *Ibid.* III. 33.

334. *Ibid.* XIII. 21.

335. *Ibid.* XIII. 23.

cannot be exhaustive of his essential nature, because spirit dominates matter and man can, by a regulated and constant exercise of his will, achieve conquest over the realm of necessity and determinism. That is the idea of his spiritual freedom which is stressed by the Lord. No doubt, it is said that agency belongs the *gunas* of *prakṛti*. But we are also reminded of our intrinsic freedom by means of which we can get over the element of determinism in our nature.

The attribution of agency to the *gunas* of *prakṛti* only seems a way of speaking, because its sole purpose is to direct man to the cultivation of that habit of thinking which makes him feel that he is not the sole or complete explanation of any action he performs, as nature also is an indispensable aid to him in the execution of all his desires and in the carrying out of his will. It is with the purpose, therefore, of wiping out the vestiges of selfishness and attachment generated by the performance of action with the intention of appropriating to himself the fruits thereof that the Lord brings to our minds the whole mechanism of action. What is here taught should be understood in this sense it. It is, therefore, wholly unreasonable to maintain that the *Gītā* accepts the *Sāṅkhya* teachings as to the passivity of the soul. That doctrine is only a subordinate element in Kṛṣṇa's teaching about freedom, the full meaning of which cannot be grasped without the intrinsic activity of the spirit. Man in his lower self is certainly a passive being and acts under the dominion of Nature. But our higher spiritual freedom is manifested in controlling the senses, the mind and all the lower impulses, even the attraction of the senses to their objects. Thus, the *Gītā* speaks of the higher will, of the free capacity the spirit possesses of getting over the element of necessity born of its immersion in Nature which stands as an insurmountable barrier, if not controlled and regulated by the spirit, in the way of its spiritual perfection.

If freedom is the higher truth of the being of man, it follows that he must ultimately triumph over the element of necessity in

his personality. It is in virtue of his freedom that he becomes the recipient, in the long run, of the grace of God. Freedom and grace are treated by Kṛṣṇa as reciprocally complementary and it is only as a consequence of the proper exercise of freedom that grace can descend upon man. He declares that even if a great sinner worships the Lord with single-minded devotion, he must be considered a saint because with a thorough-going transformation in his outlook and conduct he is now well-established in his being.³³⁶ The initiative, therefore, comes first from the individual: it is the expression of his freedom. The consequence of this is that he becomes a pious soul and attains eternal tranquillity. Thus, God is by His grace constantly active in the spiritual experience of the individual. It is because of this that the grace of God becomes genuinely effective by bringing about a radical transformation in his whole spiritual and moral outlook. The initiative having come first from the individual himself, the Lord confers His grace on him even by changing his intellectual outlook. Thus, it has been stated that the Lord bestows on those who are ever devoted to Him and worship Him with love, that knowledge which enables them to attain to Him. Grace becomes effective also by destroying his spiritual blindness born of ignorance through the lamp of knowledge.³³⁷

There are a number of ways in which the grace of God manifests itself. First of all, it is constantly active in bringing about the illumination of our minds. It brings about a remarkable change in our common, ordinary consciousness, as a result of which we rise to the knowledge of the Divine in us and become sensitive to the presence of the Lord in all things around us. This prompts us to the attainment of Him as the final fulfilment of our destiny. Such a transformation in the

336. *Ibid.* IX. 30.

337. *Ibid.* X. 11.

intellectual outlook results in bringing about moral perfection also, weaning the recipient of grace from evil propensities. It may be noticed here that the *Bhagavadgita* does not make the operation of the grace of God independent of the exercise of freedom, nor does the grace of God act independently of the powers and faculties which we possess. As it is a spiritual relationship, the grace of God does not act on the individual from outside, but is operative within him, being active in the faculties which he possesses. The Lord has said that it is by abiding within him (*ātmanbhāṣṭhī*) that He brings about a change in his way of thinking and acting.³³³ The deepening and quickening of the moral and religious awareness is thus the result of the grace of God.

When the divine grace descends on a man, he is able to conquer the temptations of the senses. It stabilizes his outlook and wisdom, so that there is no chance of his falling away from the height of spiritual perfection. Even the very conviction, that though man is always active, it is really God that acts in him, is the outcome of the operation of grace on him. It is only because of the grace of God which begins to make us feel its presence in us that we treat all our obligations as the command and will of God and the execution of them as His service by which we hope to win our fellowship and communion with Him. We have also seen in the stanzas referred to above that it is in consequence of the action of grace that the sinner reviews his previous conduct of sin and ignorance and is convinced of its evil character, so that he surrenders himself with a contrite heart to God. To crown all these is the declaration of the Lord Himself to the effect that He is earnest even in protecting and managing the livelihood of individuals who surrender themselves with single-minded devotion to Him.³³⁶

330. *Ibid.*

336. *Ibid.* IX, 22,

PR—55

XI. *Knowledge, Action and Devotion*

The argument of the *Bhagavadgītā*, as it develops from the first chapter to the eighteenth chapter, is directed to the realization of one single aim, namely, of teaching us that the highest good of man can be achieved by the performance of all his duties in accordance with his station in life in a detached frame of mind without craving for the fruits thereof. In ethics, therefore, which is the starting point of its teachings, it repudiates all materialistic theories which encourage the view that matter is the only ultimate reality and that sensuous pleasures are the only means to the achievement of the highest happiness and final fulfilment. The doctrine that all duties and actions have to be performed selflessly is rationally defensible only if the spiritualistic or idealistic view of reality is found on analysis and reflection to be the only reasonable and consistent view of the universe. If the advantages and consequences of the performance of action are not to be identified with any transient value of world, that is, with any object in time and space, then the highest end or happiness of man can consist only in the full manifestation of that divine blessedness, inner peace, integration and harmony which are the intrinsic possessions or endowments of the human spirit. The *Gītā* is at its clearest when it reiterates its thesis that it is not the satisfaction or gratification of one part of the being of man that can be the means to his complete fulfilment. Pleasures and other objects of the world which come from outside cannot add to the glory and happiness of man which is something inward and to which nothing *ab extra* can add anything. One who is established in one's self and enjoys in his inner being harmony and integration, can alone be acknowledged to enjoy divine blessedness.

The ethics of detached action is grounded in the spiritual view of reality according to which the self has its centre of activity within itself and is not affected by anything belonging to the material order. Though tenanted in the physical body, the

self neither grows nor decays with it, and hence is not corporeal. What is corporeal and sensuous cannot therefore contribute to the enlargement of man's being. The expansion of the being of man, his fulfilment, is to be sought in the inner virtues of the soul. Hence the philosophy of detached action is grounded in the psychology of self. *Adhyātma* or *ātmanīdyā* or the knowledge of self furnishes the foundation of true ethical activity, because an action can be said to be moral in the complete sense of the term only if it arises from the feeling of goodness, which in its turn cannot be identified with anything existing outside the inner being of man. The *Gītā* embarks upon a rational enquiry of the nature of the self as a preparatory ground for its ethics of detached action.

It sets high value on the concepts of purpose and freedom which are the characteristic features of conscious intelligence. Knowledge and discriminating insight, that is, a contemplative attitude towards life is necessary if the conviction of the spiritual constitution of man is to be engendered. Only then can morality be treated as not merely a psychological affair flowing from the inner desires and impulses of man, but as rooted in the nature of reality. Hence the need for a rational analysis of the spiritual constitution of human personality. Now the contemplative attitude towards life, inspiring the ethics of detached action and fortified by the spiritual view of reality, of course contributes to the inner harmony of man on the individual level. It also reaps a rich harvest on the collective level. Actions have cosmic significance as they are rooted in the very nature of things and all our actions are to be performed, therefore, from the point of view of the welfare of the world at large, *lokaśaṅgraha*.³⁴⁰ There is no question of any conflict between the individual and the social organism of which we form part. The political philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* mediates between the extremes

of individualism and socialism, because it is only as free and self-determined individuals that men can achieve their fulfilment in the social organism whose sole task is to provide conditions for the enlargement and expansion and complete fulfilment of the being of man.

Every action of the individual has reference, therefore, to the nature of reality as a whole. The individual being a part of the universe, there can be no complete account of the individual without the discriminative knowledge of Nature and the universe as a whole. Knowledge is not only an instrument of the realisation of the true nature of the self, but is also an attitude generating a corresponding radical transformation in personality, deepening and enriching a virtuous life. Knowledge is identified with virtue, because it contributes to the cultivation of virtues³⁴¹. Hence, it may be admitted that the term 'knowledge' is not used in the *Bhagavadgītā* in the exclusive sense of rational analysis of the being of man or the interpretation of reality in such a way that while it arrives at the conception of the unity of world reality, it excludes from its view certain other important elements in it. The *Gītā* adopts a sufficiently catholic view of the term 'knowledge', inasmuch as it connotes on the theoretical level the endeavour on the part of the thinker not only to analyse the nature of man, but also to concentrate attention on the nature of the universe and also the ground of it from which both of them cannot be separated. The account of its metaphysics has shown that knowledge concerns the three centralized realities of soul, Nature and God. There is a progressive transition from psychology to metaphysics, from *Adhyātma* to *Brahma-vidya*, because the philosophy of moral action cannot be defended and vindicated in a scheme of thinking in which the three principles are not real. Hence, the metaphysics taught here is not the

341. *Ibid.* XIII, 7-11.

enquiry into the nature of the impersonal Absolute which is such that there is nothing beside It in which It can express Its being or nature. Knowledge in one place has been defined as that which seeks the ultimate as immanent in all things, and this clearly precludes the possibility of its being taken in an exclusive sense. We have a threefold classification of knowledge. That knowledge is called good or *sāttvika* or worth having, which is not exclusive but rather inclusive of all things and which does not, therefore, seek a principle of unity which excludes difference and multiplicity and which, if it is permanent and eternal, is such that its immutability is not incompatible with change and diversity.³⁴² As the ultimate reality in the *Bhagavadgītā* is personal, its metaphysics does not obviously succumb to the extravagances of non-theistic monism.

There is absolutely no warrant anywhere in the text for knowledge being taken in the sense popular with such monism. Knowledge which transcends differences and seeks unity in them is not a negation of the former, but rather an affirmation of the view that unity expresses itself in differences. Differences have no reality if they are abstracted from unity; but as expressions of unity, their reality cannot be disputed. The assertion is frequently made that it is one single principle which is manifested in the multiplicity and diversity of the things of the world. The ultimate principle is one single undivided whole which appears as if it were divided in the phenomena of the world.³⁴³ Knowledge of ultimate unity is exalted as the highest one, but plurality and difference are not denied. The Lord tells Arjuna that what He proposes to explain is not that knowledge of unity which has been abstracted from multiplicity, but such knowledge of it as includes also the knowledge of its revelations

342. *Ibid.* XVIII. 20.

343. *Ibid.*

or expressions in the latter.³⁴⁴ Thus Radhakrishnan admits in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* that knowledge of unity has not been taken there in the *advaita* sense of it which holds only the knowledge of the permanent background of illusory appearances to be knowledge in the true sense of the term and denounces the knowledge of phenomena and events as mere illusory appearances. "The Supreme is to be known not only in Itself but also in Its manifestations in nature, in objective and subjective phenomena, in the principle of works and sacrifice."³⁴⁵ Again: "The unity is the truth and multiplicity is an expression of it and so is a lower truth, but not an illusion."³⁴⁶

As a consequence, therefore, of this view of knowledge, emphasis is laid on the necessity of adopting a sacramental attitude towards the world. If the Supreme is manifested in both Nature and history, both are to be treated as His expressions. If the Supreme pervades all things, if all things are impressed by Him, then our attitude to all living beings must be one of love and service. The wise man is not one who renounces the world after the attainment of spiritual insight because he comes to know that all else except *Brahman* is fictitious, but one who sees God in all living beings. It is only such persons, the *Gītā* says, that indeed know *Brahman* in truth; it is they alone who are able to know the entire secret of the knowledge of the self and of all actions.³⁴⁷

Instead of teaching that *bhakti* or devotion matures or is perfected into knowledge, Kṛṣṇa in many places seems to teach quite the other way about when He declares that it is only after

344. ज्ञानं विज्ञानसहितम् । *Ibid.* IX. 1.

345. Radhakrishnan, *Bhagavadgītā*, p. 225.

346. *Ibid.* p. 214.

347. *Bhagavadgītā*, VII. 28-30.

the knowledge of the Supreme that one develops the feeling of sincere devotion to Him. Knowledge, feeling and action are not taken in abstraction from one another, because it is one and the same self that knows, feels and wills. Hence, knowledge, feeling and action are all equally the manifestations of the nature of the human self. The doctrine of pure consciousness as constituting the essence of the self is not favoured, because it is the real nature of it that is expressed in all its thoughts, feelings and actions. The *Gita* does not seem to make any distinction between the empirical and transcendental self. Not only are we taught that knowledge is consummated in devotion, but it is pointed out that one who is attached to God with single-minded devotion is superior in merit to one who merely knows Him. Again it is said that the *yogin* is superior to the *tapasvin* and the *jñānin*.³⁴⁸ It is declared further that only by single-minded devotion can one know God in essence and in truth.

There is no dualism between knowledge and devotion, nor is there any question as to which of them is superior and which inferior, because it is by both knowledge and devotion and equally by action also that we express our love for God. Knowledge, feeling and action fuse into one another in love so that no division can be made among them. *Karma* is as much a means to the attainment of liberation as *jñāna* and *bhakti* are, but the emphasis of the *Bhagavadgītā* falls on feeling and action rather than on knowledge, because knowledge is only preparatory to the deepening of our feeling for God and a corresponding transformation in our practical attitude towards the world and all living creatures.

The criterion or standard that distinguishes a good action from an evil one, virtue from vice, is the basic ethical problem which prompts the enquiry to which the whole of the *Gita* is an

348. *Ibid.* 37. 48.

answer, side by side with the question of the highest fulfilment or the highest good. The propriety or impropriety of taking up arms against one's enemies, which involves the killing of one's nearest relations and elders, is judged in the larger context of the highest good to be achieved by man. Is it that even such a cruel action as engagement in a battle which involves killing of one's enemies can be a worthwhile business, nay, can contribute to the highest fulfilment of man? Hence that it is basically or fundamentally an ethical issue which forms the theme of Kṛṣṇa's teaching is beyond all question.

The answer given by the Lord is that action itself is neither good nor bad, neither virtuous nor vicious. It is not actions in themselves that either bind or redeem man. The intuitionist standard of morality, according to which actions in themselves without reference to the context and circumstances and the motive of the agent, is good or bad, is rejected. Charity, kindness, benevolence, non-violence and truth are actions which, without reference to any circumstance or conditions and without taking into account the motive of the individual, are claimed to be good. But such actions as violence are in themselves vicious. Kṛṣṇa, in opposition to the intuitionist theory, lays emphasis upon the will of the person performing an action. He classifies actions also into three classes of *sāttvika*, *rājasa* and *tāmasa* in accordance with the quality of will the agent exercises in performing an action. The view is maintained that even such an action as killing one's enemies in the battle-field can prove to be a veritable gateway to salvation or a means to the attainment of liberation. Hence the ascetic attitude towards action which makes us believe that it is by formal withdrawal from the field of action that we can attain blessedness and perfection is outright rejected.³⁴⁹ It is the will of the person who performs an action that determines whether

349. *Ibid*, III, 4.

his action is good or bad. On the one hand, the *Gītā* denounces the ascetic attitude of giving up all actions taken to be evil in themselves without consideration of the concrete situation in which they are performed. But on the other hand there is repeated emphasis on the performance of needful actions, according to one's station in life in a desireless frame of mind. Such persons as have subdued the riotous desires and conflicting emotions and feelings of man are able to discipline their will and reorientate them to the highest good, the highest fulfilment of man. Hence, the *Karma Mīmāṃsā* view that actions have to be performed only as means for the attainment of the selfish interests, is refuted. Another reason for rejecting it is that the pleasures of the senses which are the rewards of actions being performed selfishly, do not contribute to the fulfilment of man. They, no doubt, satisfy the needs and desires of the lower self. But they are completely incapable of satisfying the whole self. Man consciously or unconsciously hankers after absolute fulfilment, absolute perfection. But the gratification of sensuous desires contributes only to the partial fulfilment of his being.

What is the highest good of man? According to the ethics of the *Bhagavadgītā* it is everlasting happiness, enduring peace, integration and harmony that is the end of all the actions of man. It is the singular mission of this work to show how peace and blessedness can be enjoyed even while living the life of incessant activity. Hence, if an action in itself is not good or bad, but is good or bad according to the good or bad will which is its source, then, there is also the necessity of entering upon an enquiry into the nature of the self, an enquiry into the highest good conditioned by the knowledge of the self. Therefore, action is not antagonistic to the higher human good, nor is it such that his self cannot be said to be genuinely revealed in it. Hence action or *karma* is as indispensable an element in the complex consciousness of man as knowledge and feeling are. According to the

Gītā there is no antagonism between action and feeling on the one hand and between knowledge and action on the other. Feeling and action, however, are more intimately related than are knowledge and action, and yet the real worth of knowledge and action is judged by feeling. Hence that attitude towards life in which all the three elements of knowledge, feeling and action are indissolubly bound up together, can be recognised to lead to perfection and the highest fulfilment. *Jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* cannot be abstracted from one another. It is their synthesis and co-existence that leads to man's final fulfilment. This is the gist of the ethical teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* and such a view necessarily points to the view of reality on which it is based. What the metaphysical presuppositions of this type of ethics must be, and whether ethics is merely a wild goose chase which enjoins upon us to do something that we cannot do, because it does not square well with the nature of man, are problems that lead to the interpretation of the nature of the human self. So, there is a transition made from ethics to metaphysics to establish the theoretical basis of the former in the latter. *Yoga*, the science and the art of the performance of action, passes into *adhyātma* or the enquiry into the nature of the self or the science of the self.

But the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* do not stop short with the rationalistic generalisation of the nature of the self which is the engrossing concern of *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita*. The self is itself a part of the cosmos and its existence is inextricably bound up with it. The nature and constitution of the self is such that the full meaning of its possibilities can be realised only by taking into account its connection with the wider whole of the universe itself. It may be said that the finite self receives its content from the universe outside him. There are circumstances and conditions from which the finite self cannot extricate itself while it is in its embodied state; hence the element of determinism which it cannot easily overcome. Even understanding the nature of the the self in its pure, unsullied character

cannot be effective without also understanding how it works in conjunction and collaboration with Nature and how its character is thereby moulded and shaped. All its joys and sorrows, all its experiences, have in them the effects of the influence Nature exercises upon it. Hence, complete freedom is freedom in complete detachment from Nature in such a way that even though association with Nature is not shaken off, it is made subservient to the self through which it can express its possibilities.

The science of the self passed therefore into the science of the cosmos. The macrocosm in miniature *Adhyātma*, without *Brahma-vidyā*, is incomplete. Hence for grasping the full meaning of all matters relating to the self and to fortify the doctrine of selfless action, a systematic attempt at investigation into the nature of reality itself is made. If all assumptions underlying the philosophy of detached action are valid, then their validity can be guaranteed, not if they are matters merely of expediency and are governed by factors which are merely supposed to be true while not being, as a matter of fact, true, but only when they are seen to have their solid foundation in the nature of reality itself. Ethics without metaphysics is a trunk without a head. The universe bears testimony to the reality of movement, change and activity. Action is the law of life. The universe itself has emanated from action. Moreover, it is not the play of dead and soulless mechanism, for in that case the very name of 'universe' would not have been given to it. In spite of the apparent paradoxes and contradictions, the universe bears unmistakable testimony to the Supreme Mind incessantly at work in it. But for God's work in all the levels of reality manifested in the world, there would not have been the order and system in it which we designate by the name of the law of uniformity of Nature.

The *Gītā* presents a comprehensive conception of the nature and the constitution of the world and of those basic realities

and principles which can adequately account for it as a harmonious system. It is an ordered world in which we live, and whence can its order and system be derived other than from the Supreme Mind itself? Nature is taught to be the principle subordinate to God. It is not a world without the Lord in which we can perform actions without having any regard for results commensurate with them. We may not be prompted by any selfish motive for the results of our actions, and yet in the system itself there must be an intimate connection between actions and results, so that only particular actions can lead to particular results. If there were no rational order determining this connection between action and results, there would be no point in doing anything. The *Gītā* clearly asserts that *yoga* is dexterity in action.³⁵⁰ It is exactly this inner connection or a bond between actions and their results which can rightly be designated by the name of the Moral Law governing the universe of which God is the guardian or custodian. Mechanism and freedom, necessity and teleology are the obverse and reverse the same fact.

“Clearly moral significance presupposes natural significance”, observes John Hick. “For in order we may be conscious of moral obligations and exercise moral intelligence, we must first be aware of a suitable environment in which actions have foreseeable results and in which we can learn the likely consequences of our deeds. It is thus a precondition of ethical situations that there should be a stable medium, the world with its own causal laws, in which people meet and in terms of which they act. The two spheres of significance, the moral and the physical, interpenetrate in the sense that all occasions of obligation have reference, either immediately or ultimately, to overt action. Relating oneself to the ethical sphere is thus

350. योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ।

Ibid. II. 50.

a particular manner of relating oneself to the natural sphere. Ethical significance is mediated to us in and through the natural world".³⁵¹

It is one and the same law of Reason operating in the universe that accounts for both the law of causation and the moral law of *karma*. The *Gītā* draws our attention to both these aspects of the moral question. And yet this law, whether of mechanical necessity or of moral causation or freedom or teleology, is the expression of mind. There is no law without a law-giver and, without a Supreme Mind always at work in the world, there would not have been that system and order which is the basis of regularity in Nature, the field of action where all changes that take place appear regulated and controlled.

XII. From 'Adhyātma' to 'Brahmavidyā'

The metaphysics of the *Bhagavadgītā* affirms the reality of the three *puruṣas*, the *kṣara*, the *akṣara* and the *Puruṣottama* (the Lord). The *kṣara puruṣa* means the mutable *puruṣa*; it points at the same time both to the mutations, movements and changes in *prakṛti* and the individual whose freedom is under the dominance of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti*. The *akṣara puruṣa* is the pure self free from the operation of the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* on it. *Prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are eternal. They are distinct from each other, but the Supreme Lord is different from both of these. The *Gītā* has adopted the *Sāṅkhya* theory of evolution. It also accepts, like *Sāṅkhya*, the duality of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. But the dualism of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is transcended in the Supreme Lord, being respectively His higher and lower *prakṛtis*. Hence, even though they are distinguishable and distinct principles, they are inseparable from God. *Prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, the world and the individual, are not false fabrications of ignorance, *avidyā* or *māyā*, but express the purpose of God in them.

351. John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, Fontana Books, p. 112.

The metaphysics, accordingly, supports the theistic interpretation of reality. The emphasis on the acknowledgement of the three distinct realities of Nature, the finite individual and the Supreme Lord is so frequently repeated that no doubt is left about the point of view established in support of the ethical doctrine propounded by it. The whole train of reasoning starting from the recognition of the reality of moral experience, passes gradually, step by step, into metaphysics, making an attempt to discover the roots of the doctrines it seeks to propound in the scheme of things. The argument ultimately culminates in the establishment of a metaphysical doctrine in which actions performed in a real world by a real individual are real and God is the guardian and custodian of the moral law which sustains the universe. The *Gītā*, acclaimed as the most exalted of all the *Upaniṣads*, makes a distinct contribution to Indian religious thought by laying greater stress on the personal nature of the Deity which has been only abstractly set forth in the earlier literature.

There is absolutely no justification for the view that the *Upaniṣads* do not advocate the doctrine of a self-manifesting, self-determining, ultimate reality and that the *Gītā* makes altogether a radical departure from the *Upaniṣads*. On the other hand, there is development along the same line of thinking, an elaboration of the implications of the view of Ultimate Reality abstractly dealt with earlier. If non-theistic monism had been acceptable to the author of the *Gītā*, its arguments would have been altogether of a different kind, but we have instead a positive reaction against monistic metaphysics, as is clear from the drift of the argument itself. In ethics it rejects the doctrines both of the *Advaita* and *Sāṅkhya* asceticism. It adopts, no doubt, the *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita* method of rational discrimination between the *ātman* and the *anātman*, but the *ātman* is not the Supreme Reality. It does not advance the metaphysics of the self as the ultimate truth, nor does it approve of the *Sāṅkhya* isolation, *kaivalya*, 'the flight of the alone to the alone', as the

highest end of human life. The *Yoga* method is recommended as a means for the realisation of the true nature of the self; but, again, the end is not merely the withdrawal of the self from the scene of *prakṛti*. The view of the ultimate destiny of the finite individual set forth is that of entrance into communion with God or attainment of similarity of nature with Him. It is service of God rather than identity with Him or the merger or extinction of the individuality of the self in Him that is the *summum bonum* of life.

Neither in its metaphysics does the *Gītā* endorse the *Sāṅkhya* dualism, nor in ethics the *Sāṅkhya* rationalism of the contemplative attitude to life as in itself adequate for the attainment of the supreme purpose of life. There is openly protest against the passivity of the *puruṣa*. The widespread interpretation which seeks to vindicate its ethics of detached action on the basis of the intrinsic passivity of the self is completely unfounded.

We are taught that the self is a dynamic power behind all our psychological activities, even though the unquestioned role and assistance of Nature and her products cannot be denied. *Prakṛti* is only the chief executive; the plans to be carried out are set out and mooted by the individual self itself. In any attempt to furnish a consistent account of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* on the interdependent topics of ethics and metaphysics, one must take a comprehensive view of the assertions made in the whole course of it and correlate them with one another. If there are many statements to the effect that one should not think of appropriating to oneself the results of actions performed because it is not the self that acts but rather the *gunas* of *Prakṛti*; and if again the Lord says that even though abiding in the body, the self neither acts nor is affected by the results of actions performed by it;³⁵² there are

352. शरीरस्थोऽपि कौन्तेय न करोति न लिप्यते ।

Ibid. XIII. 31.

many others in which an opposite thesis is sought to be established, namely, that the self is the active, dynamic animating principle of all the activities in the human organism. Thus, in the fifteenth chapter, the Lord emphasises the direct involvement of the *puruṣa* in all its psychological activities: "This self, permanently abiding within the ears, the eyes, the skin, the tongue, the nose and also the mind, enjoys the objects of sense".³⁵³

It is true that in its embodied state it cannot act, unless assisted in the execution by the *gunas* of *prakṛti*, and its activity cannot be completely free. There is definitely a sense in which these *gunas* may be said to be really responsible for all activity. Yet it is not the *gunas* that are bound or redeemed, but it is rather the *puruṣa* who entangles himself in their meshes and is redeemed by the discriminative knowledge of the nature of the character of *prakṛti*. Such a discriminative knowledge is itself the result of the higher exercise of the will which the *puruṣa* possesses, and this will cannot, therefore, be assimilated to *prakṛti* and its modes.

The only true meaning of all such passages as seem apparently to exclude all activity from the *puruṣa* and assign it to *prakṛti*, is that the *puruṣa* is influenced by *prakṛti* or by its *gunas* or is assisted in executing his plans and designs. Thus, it is only a way of bringing home to our minds the truth of the view that the finite self is not the sole explanation or source of any activity and that, therefore, since the actions do not flow from it alone, the results of the actions performed by it depend not only upon it but also upon other factors and conditions beyond the jurisdiction of its power, so that it need not at all lay its claim to them. In describing the finite self as the active power in all psychological activities, there has been a pointed reference made to the faulty vision of the fools who are not able to

perceive the active soul, overpowered by the *gunas*, in such of its activities as leaving the body at the time of death or in enjoying things or even when it exercises its powers. It is only such people as see through the eyes of knowledge that really know it and are thus persuaded to believe that all such activities are not mechanical activities.³⁵⁴ In the same chapter it has been said of the individual self that it leaves the body and that, in passing from one body to another body, it carries the mind and the senses along with itself. By reason of its being the active power, a dynamic agent, or directive intelligence, it is said in the same context that the individual self draws to itself all the six organs including the mind as the sixth.³⁵⁵ It has also been categorically asserted that through its conjunction with Nature it experiences and enjoys the *gunas* born of *prakṛti* and that it is this involvement of it in its experience of the objects born of the *gunas* of the *prakṛti* that is the cause of its embodiment in lower or higher orders of being. No sharp distinction, therefore, seems to have been made between the transcendent and empirical states of consciousness such as is characteristic of both *Sāṅkhya* and *Advaita*.

Mere occurrence of the terms, *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, the adoption of the methodology of *Yoga* and the dependence upon the characteristic *Sāṅkhya* method of proving the intrinsic purity of the self and its difference from *prakṛti* cannot be treated as any solid ground for the assimilation of the metaphysics of the *Gītā* to any of these schools of Indian thought. *Sāṅkhya* is invoked only as a method or procedure of knowing things and the status of the self as distinct from that of *prakṛti* and as an attitude towards the world, and by no means as a support for the formal renunciation of work. In view of the fact, further, that *Yoga* here is not the means to *kaivalya* or the isolation of the self

354. *Ibid.* XV. 10.

355. *Ibid.* XV. 7.

from the scenes of *prakṛti*, but signifies the union of the soul with God, any identification of the world outlook of the *Gītā* with the *Yoga* philosophy of Patanjali is wholly untenable. Neither the dualism of *Sāṅkhya* nor the characteristic implications of it, nor even the falsity of the world and the absolute identity of *Brahman* seems to be the object of the teachings of the *Gītā* to emphasise. From which it follows that its metaphysics has definitely a theistic orientation. The *Gītā*, says Professor Hiriyanna, "recognizes a super-soul (*uttama-puruṣa*) which is unknown to *Sāṅkhya*. Again, there is no reference whatever in the work to the well-known *Sāṅkhya* ideal of *kainālyā* or spiritual aloofness, the goal of life as represented here being different—'becoming *Brahman*' or 'reaching' the presence of God'. The idea of severance from *prakṛti* may be implicit in the latter, for without wresting itself from the clutches of matter, the soul has no chance of being restored to its original abode. But what we should remember is that the separation from *prakṛti* is not conceived here as the ultimate ideal. It is only a means to an end, which is positive unlike the negative one in classical *Sāṅkhya*." 356

The fact, therefore, that the *Gītā* brings to the forefront of philosophical thinking the necessity of overcoming the dualism of *Sāṅkhya* by subordinating it to the Supreme Lord of whom matter and the self are but the two *prakṛtis*, the higher and the lower, both of which are eternal and real and inseparable from God, coupled with the acknowledgment of the relative independence of the finite individual whose freedom is expressed in moral experience which in its turn is a real expression of its nature—is a conclusive proof of the theism taught by Kṛṣṇa being of the type of Viśiṣṭādvaita. The identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Lord is only a figurative expression of the immanence of God in it. Neither has the universe been declared to be the product of ignorance, nor has the

356. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 131-2,

identity of the individual been declared to be completely merged in the identity of the Impersonal Absolute. The monistic interpretation of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* does not accord well with its language.

In this short sketch of the ethics and the metaphysics of the *Bhagavadgītā*, we have taken account of all the kindred problems and issues from the standpoints of both theism and monism, and it calls for an impartial and dispassionate study of all the arguments that have been advanced in support of the thesis which maintains that it teaches in ethics the formal renunciation of works backed by a psychology which advocates the passivity of soul, and in metaphysics the doctrine of the Impersonal Absolute. On the other hand, we have seen that moral experience, if its presuppositions and assumptions are to be true, can be validated only in a scheme of thinking which advocates theism. The difficulty with all forms of monism is that they tend in the final analysis to propound the doctrine of only one mind at work in all individual minds, so that freedom of will becomes a delusion or at best the product of a misconception of the nature of ultimate reality. Commenting, for example, on the *Gītā*, VIII. 3, Ānandagiri says that *Brahman* Itself by entering into human bodies becomes the individual self.³⁵⁷ But if, as the *Gītā* teaches, the world is sacramental in nature, an expression of the will of God, and if its sole business is to carry out the designs of God, then the individual souls cannot be mere reproductions of the divine activity, but must be free agents to whom God has communicated freedom for the attainment of their moral perfection by carrying out His designs. In an impersonal scheme of thinking, such questions as are raised by the reality of moral experience are of no relevance at all, and the fact that the *Gītā* starts with the reality of moral experience proves conclusively the theistic background of its metaphysics.

357. परमेव ब्रह्म देहादौ प्रविश्य प्रत्यगात्मभावमनुभवति ।

CHAPTER VII

THE STATUS OF GOD IN SANKARA, BHĀSKARA AND YĀDAVAPRAKĀSA

I. Protests against the Advaitic Interpretation

The treatment of the nature of God in Viśiṣṭādvaita as set forth in the foregoing two chapters has been mainly exegetical in nature. Attention has been focused on whether the doctrine of God as personal and as a self-revealing, self-manifesting and self-determining reality has been taught in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. This was necessary, because the conventional emphasis on their monistic drift has assumed the status of infallible orthodoxy. Much has so far been written in defence of the claim that it is only an impersonal view of existence that has been maintained in them.

The fact that the earliest commentaries available on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* came to be written at a time when the impersonal view of existence had a firm grip on the Indian mind, accounts for this rather deplorable phase in the history of Indian religious thought. Yet, we have to reckon with the fact that a prodigious variety of other parallel developments in Indian religious thought, through equally scholarly and authoritative commentaries on the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, has been brought about by a long line of outstanding religious reformers and thinkers voicing forth emphatically their protest against the atheistic or monistic interpretations put on them. It may, therefore, be said, as Dr. S. N. Dasgupta and others have

pointed out,³⁵⁸ that the monistic interpretation which has been repudiated by all the post-Saṅkarite Vedāntic teachers, is more an original view which is the product of the thinking of an individual thinker than a faithful elucidation of their teachings.

II. *Personality of God and Religion*

In this chapter our concern will be a critical examination of other alternatives to the Viśiṣṭādvaita view of God. The fundamental assumptions of the monistic view of reality have been examined. But this is not enough. In a philosophical treatment it is obligatory to consider all the possible alternatives to any point of view proposed as the most adequate one. The only standard of truth that can be adopted here is that of consistency, coherence, harmony and convergence leading to the same final conclusion regarding any particular problem we are called upon to solve. Even in natural sciences, it is the coherence of alternative points of view that leads to truth.

If the religious view of the reality and existence is true, then the ultimate reality which is the final explanation of all things, must be the Supreme Mind, and such a mind must also be personal. Ultimate Reality, which is not matter and which cannot be identified with such other categories of being as time, chance, necessity and so on, must be mind, and it is in terms of mind that we can make sense of the universe confronting us. Such characteristic features of the world as order and system which cannot be set aside, are expressions only of mind, and hence idealism rather than materialism can give a more adequate explanation of the universe. But it is one thing to say that it is mind which is at the root of the universe and our experience of it, and quite another thing to grasp what mind and experience, in point of fact, are.

358. See pp. 257-8 and 312 *supra*.

Idealism makes little sense if on the one hand it affirms the existence of mind as the ultimate character of reality and on the other hand robs it of all its concrete contents in the absence of which we cannot form any clear notion of it. If at all the term 'God' can have any meaning for us, then we cannot in the same breath both affirm His existence and deny that He is personal. In fact, such affirmation and denial are mutually contradictory. If at all we have to think, we can think only as human beings, and since personality is the highest category that is known to us, we run the risk of making God sub-human, if we do not think Him to be personal. Impersonal God, in other words, does not make any sense.

Personality is the ultimate category of explanation in religious experience. If it is in virtue of the possession of personality that man is higher than all other animate and inanimate orders of being, then the ascription of it to God cannot be viewed as unphilosophical.

"It is from our knowledge of self," observes F. R. Tennant, "that our fundamental categories of identity, continuance, substance, end; in terms of which we 'know'—interpret the world—are derived. That of personality is in the same case; and is our highest interpretative concept. For the theist it is the key to the universe." He goes on to point out that personality is a product of the world-process and hence organic to Nature. Our interpretation of the universe has to be in terms of this concept. If this be anthropomorphism, it cannot be helped. For anthropomorphism is "the inevitable mould into which human thought is cast and by which it is shaped from first to last." Man being man must think as man.³⁵⁹

359. F. R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology*, Vol. I., p. 127.

It is the doctrine of God as personal that is the principal theme in the foregoing chapters. But all that is meaningful and can be stated in the context of religion is without any exception a direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious explication of the implications of personality, whether in God or in man. But the ascription of personality to God has been very often resented by philosophers. This however is due to misconception concerning the standpoint from which one looks at things.

God does not become imperfect because He possesses personality. We have to choose between an impersonal God with whom no personal relationship is possible and one with personality which makes religion something uniquely significant. Religion is a direct encounter between God and man and, in the absence of such direct relationship, religion cannot be a meaningful experience. To say that God is absolute in the sense that we cannot think of any relationship between Him and man is to utter words without any meaning. In religious discourse, our relationship with God cannot be supposed to be radically different from our relations with other human beings. It is the personal relationship existing between God and man that we designate by the name of religion. Hence, God is absolute, not because he has no relation with anything but precisely because He is such that all things can be understood only with reference to Him, and for this reason it is in the very nature of that which we take to be ultimately real, to have no end to the relations that it bears to them. To be ultimately real is to be related to all things in such a way that their dependence upon it for their existence is part of the meaning of its nature.

III. Pre-Saṅkarite Vedānta

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, God is absolute not in the sense that it excludes all relations, but because all things depend upon Him and He sustains them all in their existence. God

certainly has a nature of His own, apart from His manifold relations. Yet holding all things by the innumerable relations which He bears to them is no less a part of the nature of His being, and we cannot mutilate the being of God by holding that His existence in Himself is so utterly different from His existence for others or in others that the latter becomes a falsification of His true essence and character. Such a procedure has been the source of many embarrassing situations in theological thinking. It is in such situations as these that a heated debate arises as to the true nature of God and we are called upon to define what we actually mean by the term 'God'.

There were many schools of *Vedānta* which were not satisfied with the monistic interpretation of the earlier *Vedāntic* literature. They challenged the tenability of non-theistic monism and made an earnest effort to supersede it by advancing in its place their own views, which though in many respects improvements on the earlier one, fail to give us a conception of God adequate to both theological and practical needs

Whatever the disabilities of these *Vedāntic* schools, it must be said that they were reluctant to interpret the *Upaniṣads* in the abstract manner characteristic of the *Advaita* of Śaṅkarācārya. If there be any truth in the contention that some of the later *Upaniṣads* like *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Svetāśvatara* and even *Īśa* which belongs to the older group, did not show any anxiety over the possibility of any logical contradiction between unity and plurality, multiplicity and difference, the finite and the infinite and so many other metaphysical antinomies and paralogisms which evidently were the products of too much of the latter-day systematic interpretation and of sophisticated thinking, then the conclusion that may be legitimately drawn is that there must have been other teachers acutely aware of the difficulties of this line of thinking.

It would be certainly an error to treat the *Upaniṣads* as putting forward their metaphysical doctrines in the form of

watertight, cast-iron doctrines. They have come down to us from an age in which the leading thinkers were concerned more with their direct, intuitive, immediate realisation of God and grappling with the problems of their relation to God, than with any conscious effort for a logical and critical scrutiny of their insights. Even at the time when they were being written, many people took their passages literally and, for them, therefore, there was no contradiction between the apparently conflicting texts. Modern scholars are not aware of any early interpretation of the *Upanisads* on the line of thinking to which the *Advaita* of Saṅkara gave prominent expression. The *vivarta* doctrine of the illusory appearance of the world was given a logical formulation for the first time by Bhartṛhari, the author of *Vākyapadīya*, who pointed out that meanings of words are caused by the *vivarta* process of causation. The Buddhist had already invoked *vivarta* as a method of explaining the false appearance of things. It was only after Buddhism that the *vivarta* doctrine of causation—which is not in point of fact a doctrine of causation at all—could be adopted as the method of understanding the relation between *Brahman* and the false appearance of the world.

Saṅkara himself has referred to schools of *Vedānta* which were in sympathy with the dualistic and realistic interpretations of the *Upanisads*. Thus he says that many amongst the *Vedāntins* maintained that the individual self was real and not a false appearance³⁶⁰ Prof. M. Hiriyanna has collected the scattered references to these pre-Saṅkarite schools of *Vedānta* and underlined the contrast between them and Saṅkara's *Advaita*. Even the *Brahmasūtra* of Bādarāyaṇa, universally acclaimed as a systematic study of the *Upanisads* and which is supposed to be the most authoritative of many similar treatises now lost to us, has been taken now not to support the theory of Saṅkara. It may

360. पारमार्थिकमपि जैवं रूपं मन्यन्ते । अस्मदीयाश्च केचित् ।

Saṅkara's commentary on *Brahma-sūtras*, I. 3. 19.

be added that the *sūtras* themselves, even though they are short and cryptic, are nevertheless clear and unambiguous. Dr. Dasgupta feels that the *Vedānta-sūtras* are dualistic and realistic and not monistic: "It seems to me pretty certain that Bādarāyaṇa's philosophy was some kind of *Bhedābheda* or a theory of transcendence and immanence of *Brahman*.....The doctrine of *Bhedābheda* is certainly prior to Śaṅkara, as it is the dominant view of most of the *Purāṇas*. It seems probable, also, that Bhartṛprapañca refers to Bodhāyana, who is referred to as *Vṛttikāra* by Rāmaṇuja and *Vṛttikāra* and Upavarṣa by Śaṅkara, and to Dramidācārya referred to by Śaṅkara and Rāmaṇuja; all of these held some form of *Bhedābheda* doctrine."³⁶¹

Quite naturally, therefore, the monistic interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* by Śaṅkara startled many other *Vedāntic* teachers who could not reconcile it with their religious sensibility. Partly therefore in obedience to the demand for a more faithful interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* and partly with the intention of making them compatible with the religious view of Ultimate Reality, some of them wrote scholarly commentaries. The schools of Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāsa were reactions against the absolute monism of the *Advaita* of Śaṅkarācārya. Śaṅkara's is the only interpretation of the *Upaniṣads*, according to which the final conclusion of their teachings is rigorous monism. On the one hand, there were reactions to Śaṅkara's teachings manifested in the *Bhedābheda* schools of Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāsa; and on the other there were many post-Śaṅkarite Vaiṣṇava schools of *Vedānta* all of which were united in opposing the views of Śaṅkara.

"There is reason to believe," says Dr. Dasgupta, "that the *Brahma-sūtras* were first commented upon by some Vaiṣṇava writers who held some form of modified dualism. There have

been more than half a dozen Vaiṣṇava commentators of the *Brahma-sūtras* who not only differed from Śaṅkara's interpretation, but also differed largely amongst themselves in accordance with the different degrees of stress they laid on the different aspects of their dualistic creeds...I am myself inclined to believe that the dualistic interpretations of the *Brahma-sūtras* were probably more faithful to the *sūtras* than the interpretations of Śaṅkara." 362 Radhakrishnan remarks that "one cannot be certain on the point whether or not Śaṅkara is a faithful interpreter of Bādarāyaṇa's work ... Deussen admits that there are great differences between Bādarāyaṇa and Śaṅkara." 363

Rāmānuja had the religious interests of the relation between God and man and God and the world uppermost in his mind, and he was seeking therefore a philosophical justification of his faith in the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. His thinking centres round the three principles of God, man and Nature, because the complex structure of religious experience involves the recognition of the reality of all the three ontological principles. *Brahman* or God, however, is the supreme reality to which man and Nature are subordinate. If the end of religion is perfection and fulfilment of human life, then much depends upon how we think about man and the nature of his relation with God on the one hand and with the world on the other. If man has his existence derived from God who sustains him in every moment, he cannot live a meaningful life without the consciousness of his dependence upon God. This leads naturally to problems relating to the nature of God, because without understanding the character of the relationship between God and man, it is impossible to grasp the nature of his destiny and the means whereby it can be fulfilled. Rāmānuja has strong reasons to believe that the doctrines of God in the *Advaita* of

362. S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp. 420-1.

363. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 470.

Saṅkarācārya on the one hand and in the *Bhedābheda* schools of Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa on the other, are not helpful to religious consciousness. The central question that engages his attention is whether the kind of God that Saṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa set up as the object of religion does squarely meet the demands of religious consciousness, whether it is the doctrine of a perfect or an imperfect God that they offer to us.

Only a God who is 'something than which nothing greater can be thought'—*yasmātiparam nāparamasti kiñcit*³⁶⁴—can be the adequate object of theistic belief and adoration. That alone can guarantee the freedom and blessedness of the individual soul. To adore any being less than God who is the eternal abode of all infinite perfections, is nothing short of conceptual idolatry. Religion is adoration, and nothing short of a perfect and infinite God can be its object.

IV. Īśvara the Victim of Avidyā : the Dualism of Philosophy & Religion

The crucial question is whether the religious consciousness can be satisfied by that conception of Ultimate Reality which reduces it to a mere impersonal principle. It is true that there cannot be any ultimate contradiction or incoherence between the needs of the different sides of our spiritual life whose complex structure cannot be disputed. If philosophy is committed to its responsibility of taking account of all sides of human experience of which religious experience is an important expression, then an ultimate discord between philosophy and religion cannot be sustained. But there are instances in the history of thought both in India and the West in which religious needs and requirements have been declared to be incompatible with logical standards of consistency and coherence.

Thus Bradley in his Introduction to his *Appearance and Reality* observes that metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct. But this is qualified by his statement that the impulse to justify is equally an instinct, and we may say that a rational analysis and justification of what is to be deeply rooted in our nature cannot be pronounced to be a wholly irrational affair. It is from the rational nature of man that the needs of the spirit spring up and man's belief in God is no less the result of a logical understanding of human life and universe than are the different branches of natural science and other forms of knowledge. It is from one and the same self-consciousness that all the different forms of experience and knowledge spring up, and this cannot therefore justify any hard and fast line of demarcation between philosophy and religion. Bradley has emphatically ruled out the possibility of the conformity of a religious conception of Ultimate Reality with theoretical demands.

Saṅkara's statements concerning ultimate, irreconcilable, unmediated opposition between philosophy and religion are more pronounced than Bradley's. There are many passages in Bradley's writings in which his point of view can be easily assimilated to the religious approach to the Ultimate Reality. In the *Advaita* of Saṅkarācārya, however, not a single statement with concessions to religion can be found. It seems to be a paradoxical undertaking to reconcile philosophy and religion with each other, seeking thereby to demonstrate that the God of religion is the same as the Absolute of philosophy and that therefore the mind of man can be satisfied with nothing short of the Ultimate Reality which cannot be conceived to be other than personal. The question is whether personality can be a valid category in considerations concerning the ultimate nature of reality. We need not elaborate this point, as Saṅkara has drawn a clear-cut line of demarcation between philosophy and religion, leaving us in no doubt about what he takes to be the truth.

There is absolutely no ambiguity as to the status that Sāṅkara assigns to religion and the worship of God in his preference for philosophy and the contemplative ideal of the knowledge of the Absolute. The God of worship is phenomenal and is the product of ignorance in the same sense in which other objects caused by name and form are false. Omnipotence and omniscience do not belong to God as His intrinsic powers and attributes which He possesses with absolute possession and which are eternally indistinguishable and inseparable from Him. His lordship, omniscience and omnipotence are contingent upon *avidyā*, so that there is no point in saying that these attributes belong to Him, when for the wise man who attains wisdom they are swept away by enlightenment.³⁶⁵

Again, the lower *Brahman* or God, associated as He is with name and form and adjuncts, can confer on us only lordship over the worlds, a fruit falling within the sphere of *saṃsāra*, nescience having not as yet been discarded. This amounts to saying that salvation cannot be attained by the worship of God.³⁶⁶

Religion in *Advaita* is certainly the expression of a truth lower than that which philosophy gives. There is an inherent contradiction affecting the nature of the Ultimate Reality that religion presents to us. Radhakrishnan has pointed out that when the Absolute becomes an object of worship, it becomes

365. अविद्यात्मकोपाधिपरिच्छेदापेक्षमेवेभ्वरस्येभ्वरत्वं सवज्ञत्वं सर्व-
शक्तित्वं च, न परमार्थतो विद्ययापास्तसर्वोपाधिस्वरूप आत्मनीशित्व-
शितव्यसर्वज्ञत्वादिव्यवहार उपपद्यते ।

Sāṅkara's Commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, II. 1. 14.

366. तस्य चापरब्रह्मोपासनस्य सन्निधौ श्रयमाणं.....इत्यादि जग-
दैश्वर्यलक्षणं संसारगोचरमेव फलं भवति, अविवर्तितत्वादविद्यायः ।

Ibid. IV. 3. 14.

something less than the Absolute. The dilemma is: "If God is perfect, religion is impossible; if God is imperfect, religion is ineffective.... True religion requires the Absolute".³⁶⁷

Iṣvara or the God of religion, the highest truth for religious consciousness, is the maximum of being with the minimum of non-being. *Iṣvara* is phenomenal and is the first product of the entanglement of *Brahman* in the meshes of *māyā*. There is little qualitative difference between the liberated individual, the *jīvanmukta*, and God. Thus God is almost a glorified *saṃsārin* and His life lasts till the universe continues to exist. As the destiny of God is inextricably bound up with that of the world, *Iṣvara* disappears into the Absolute as soon as the cosmic drama comes to an end.³⁶⁸ *Iṣvara* is not Ultimate Reality.

In some of the recent powerful defences of *Advaita* metaphysics, attempts have been made to prove that *Brahman* is not a victim of *māyā* or *avidyā*. The subjection of *Brahman* to *avidyā* or ignorance has been disputed. There are, doubtless, some passages in which Śaṅkara has claimed that *Brahman* is not affected by ignorance: "Nor can false knowledge distort or contaminate that which is real. The water of the mirage, for instance, can by no means render the saline soil miry with moisture. Similarly, ignorance cannot in any way affect the knower of the field even in the least".³⁶⁹ The same is true of God also ³⁷⁰

367. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 97.

368. अविद्याऽद्वैतस्य तद्विषयनिरोधो भवति व्योमेव घटकरकाद्युपाध्यनिरोधी । *Ibid.* II. 1. 14.

369. न च मिथ्याज्ञानं परमार्थवस्तु दूषयितुं समर्थं । न ह्यपरदेशं स्नेहेन पङ्कीकर्तुं शक्नोति मरीच्युदकं, तथाऽविद्याः क्षेत्रज्ञस्य न किञ्चित्कर्तुं शक्नोति ।

Śaṅkara's Commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, XIII. 3.

370. न हि कचिदपि लोके अविद्याद्यस्तधर्मेण कस्यचित् उपकारः अपकारो वा दृष्टः । *Ibid.*

It is often said that if *avidyā* or ignorance is negative in nature, the question of the subjection of *Brahman* to it does not arise at all. We need not here plunge into a long debate on this issue. After all, if *Brahman* is the only reality, the question even of the false appearance of the world and of the individual self has to be faced. Śaṅkara himself has not taken care to define the exact nature of the relation between *avidyā* and *Brahman*. It may be granted, even if we make sufficient allowance for the view that *Brahman* is not affected by ignorance, that unless somehow or other ignorance qualifies the nature of *Brahman*, the false appearance of *Brahman* as the individual self cannot be explained. Those passages, therefore, in which Śaṅkara argues that *Brahman* is free from ignorance or *ajñāna* are paralleled by many others in which its imprisonment in the circle of ignorance has been emphatically affirmed.

It is true that later *Advaita Vedānta* developed the conception of ignorance as something positive or *bhāvarūpa*. This is not a forced or unwarranted graft on the *Advaita* of Śaṅkarācārya, but is rather a natural development of it. Śaṅkara could not give a satisfactory solution of the appearance of the world. In his logic of abstract identity, there was no room for the co-existence of timeless *Brahman* and the temporal world. Nor could the individual self which has its location in time and history be reconciled with *Brahman* which is beyond the boundaries of space, time and causation. Sometimes Śaṅkara simply passes over in silence all questions pertaining to the reality of the universe and the individual self by saying that we have merely to accept them as illusory appearances and no question ought to be raised as to why they appear and what they are. But the question is pertinent, and mere silence can be no reply. If Śaṅkara says sometimes that the question of the origin of ignorance or *avidyā* is illegitimate, on many other occasions he is not slow to admit that *Brahman* does really fall a victim to *avidyā* or ignorance.

Some have raised much hue and cry at Rāmānuja's objection to Śaṅkara's doctrine of *māyā* so far as the question of its locus is concerned. They say that Rāmānuja is grossly mistaken when he raises the question of the locus or *āśraya* of ignorance or *avidyā*. If *avidyā* is fundamentally negative in meaning, it is illegitimate to raise any question as to its locus. But Śaṅkara himself has raised this question in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* (xiii. 3). He could not avoid the question of the relation of *avidyā* to *Brahman*. The *vivarta* doctrine of causation which is fundamental to *Advaita Vedānta* is incompatible with the reality of the world. If *vivarta* is true, the world must be a false appearance. However, the appearance of the world, even though it may be supposed in the ultimate analysis to be false and delusive, is positive, as it is at least an object of perception. Śaṅkara has vehemently attacked the Buddhist doctrine of subjectivism. Hence, this positive nature even of the false appearance of the universe and of the individual self has to be explained. Śaṅkara was obliged, therefore, to treat *avidyā* somehow or other as positive in nature. Unless *Brahman* is somehow or other affected by it, the false appearance of the individual self and of the universe cannot be understood. The doctrine of *avidyā* as something positive which was elaborated by the later *Advaita Vedānta*, is part of the original doctrine of Śaṅkara himself. But, if *avidyā* is thus an element in the total conception of the nature of *Brahman*, it is to the doctrine of a finite God that *Advaita* leads us. But a finite God cannot meet the demands of religious consciousness. Rāmānuja's objection to Śaṅkara's *Advaita* flows from the realisation of this basic weakness of the *Advaita* doctrine of *Brahman*.³⁷¹

371. जगन्मूलभूतमज्ञानमनादि भावरूपं न तु ज्ञानाभावरूपम् ।
भावरूपेण प्रतीयमानस्य जगतः मस्याभावोपादानकत्वासंभवात् ।
इदमेव भावरूपमज्ञानमविद्याशब्देनोच्यते ।

Sarvadarsanasaṅgraha, p. 83.

In regard to the status of God in absolute monism, the position of *Advaita* is defended on the ground that religion has at least practical or empiricial validity. Whereas *Brahman* is impersonal and is the ultimate truth, God or *Īśvara* is the truth from the standpoint of the world and of logic. Both the demands of theoretical consistency and of moral experience, it is claimed, are met in that doctrine of Ultimate Reality which is both personal and impersonal. Thus, it is said that since absolute monism makes room for a personal God, it is not repugnant to religious consciousness. The question, however, that such thinkers often pass over is whether a personal God who is not the ultimate truth and ultimate reality, can really satisfy religious consciousness. It may be asked if it is perfect God that absolute monism offers for religious consciousness. The dualism of the two types of truth, namely, transcendent truth (*paramārtha-satya*) and empirical truth (*vyavahāra-satya*), does justice neither to truth nor to error. There can be no middle ground between truth and error. It is no use saying that it is one and the same reality that is *Brahman* or the Absolute from the higher, intuition point of view and God or *Īśvara* from the lower, logical point of view. The whole question concerning the relative value of the Absolute and God (or *Brahman* and *Īśvara*) turns upon the connection of imperfection with *Brahman*.

In the *Upaniṣads*, duality or difference is not repugnant to the integrity of being. Differentiation and manifestation are real expressions of the nature and essence of *Brahman*, because *Brahman* is prompted by the desire of multiplying Himself. Self-determination belongs to His very nature. Multiplicity and difference form part of His being. Plurality and difference are false, only when they are taken apart from *Brahman* by whom they are permeated. The tendency to condemn and denounce plurality and difference as false is un-*Upaniṣadic*. This tendency leads to regarding that aspect of *Brahman* which is manifest in the world of plurality and difference as the product of *avidyā*: He becomes the victim of ignorance. Absolute monism declares

the impulse of self-expression in Him to be a limitation. *Iśvara* or God becomes the lower truth and *mokṣa* is impossible to achieve through the worship of or devotion to God.

Absolute monism even downgrades *Brahman* to the status of the finite individual. Neither the finite individual nor the world has any reality. They have only the reality of appearance. It is *Brahman* that appears both as the world and as the individual self. Absolute monists do not feel any hesitation in making the devastating remark that it is *Brahman* who is bound by His ignorance and is liberated by His own knowledge.³⁷² He becomes therefore as much a victim of ignorance as the individual self itself is. A doctrine of God which downgrades Him to the status of the individual self can neither be a doctrine of God, nor of the individual self. It lands us in nihilism, because there is, as a matter of fact, neither God nor the individual self. Further, if there is nothing besides *Brahman*, then He Himself, being the same as the individual self, must be subject to its pains and sorrows and of the trivialities of terrestrial existence. Can such a God be the highest object of adoration? Can religious consciousness be satisfied with a finite God? God or *Saguṇa Brahman* is the maximum of pleasure with the minimum of pain. Can such a God give us absolute joy? Can such a God be bliss itself from which, as the *Upanisads* claim, beings are born, by which they are sustained and to whom they ultimately return?

The God of religion is claimed to be less than the Absolute of philosophy. But the religious feelings of man cannot be satisfied with anything short of the Absolute. If the religious believer can have as the object of his meditation and worship only what is a victim of illusion, can there be genuine religious consciousness or any interest in the struggle for

372. ब्रह्मैव स्वाविद्यया संसरति स्वविद्यया मुच्यते ।

Saṅkara's commentary on *Bṛih. Up.*, quoted in Vedānta Deśika's *Tattva-muktā-kalāpa* with *Bhāva-prakāśikā*, p. 353.

liberation? Does not such a conviction rather perpetuate bondage and intensify its acuteness? There is no escape from these drastic consequences of the dualism of the Absolute of philosophy and God of religion which uses the concept of ignorance to explain finite existence and makes God Himself a victim of nescience. It is argued that concreteness in the Absolute, being the gift of *avidyā*, is antithetical to the very notion of the Absolute. But this is not the right view of the Absolute that can be logically sustained. "If the Absolute is expansive and all-pervasive only," says Mahendranath Sircar, "it is no Absolute, for it denies by its exclusive expansiveness the concrete expression. And anything truly Absolute must be simultaneously all-pervasive and concrete. *Aparicchinnatva* (unlimitedness) and *paricchinnatva* (limitation) are not contradictions; they two together give us the full import of the Absolute and the finite. The being which can appear both as unlimited and limited, abstract and concrete, is really infinite and truly indefinable, for it denies all logical determination and is the synthesis of what is apparently contradictory. And this possibility is potential in the dynamic theory which synthesizes the concepts apparently contradictory from the static standpoint. Concreteness is not then opposed to the expansion of Being".³⁷³

Such considerations lie behind Rāmanuja's opposition to the doctrine of the two *Brahmans*, one lower and the other higher. In his invocatory stanza, introducing the subject-matter of his book, *Vedārtha-Saṅgraha*, he launches a violent onslaught on the doctrine. The most serious objection for which *Advaita* has no answer is that, according to it, even the Supreme Reality falls into the predicament of ignorance. *Brahman* is the highest and ultimate object of adoration and worship and is the home of all perfections and is opposed to all imperfections. The assertion

³⁷³. Mahendranath Sircar, *Comparative Studies in Vedantism*, p. 110.

that He Himself is subject to *avidyā* snatches away from us the ultimate resort and refuge of all our happiness and all our aspirations. In the *Upaniṣads* He has been described as the inexhaustible perennial source of all our happiness. Surrender to Him ensures our security and guarantees our freedom from all troubles, pains and sorrows of life. *Brahman* is our saviour, because in Him all the troubles and pains, anxieties and agonies of life are completely obliterated. But what security, blessedness and peace can there be in store for us and of what avail can religion as the consciousness of God be to us, if He is Himself a victim of ignorance? That is the objection that Rāmānuja makes to the *Advaita* doctrine of lower *Brahman*. How can the helpless victim of *māyā* or *avidyā* be that which religious consciousness seeks? Religious consciousness is not only the recognition of *Brahman* as the ultimate value, but also the affirmation of the transcendence of God to all things. It is in virtue of such transcendence that *Brahman* is opposed to all imperfections and is the home of all perfections. But *avidyā* is the very opposite of all this. In that case, God cannot give us what we expect from Him, because such a God would not be infinite, perfect and omnipotent in so far as He would not Himself be able to overcome the operation of the force of *avidyā* upon Him. Ignorance veils His nature or essence, involves Him in transmigratory existence and the endless series of birth and death and makes Him appear hardly any better than the finite individual self. "Does *Brahman* who is the cause of the world and is free from limiting adjuncts, know or not know the individual self who is in reality non-different from Him? He is not omniscient, if He does not know him; but if He knows him, then He must know his misery to be His own misery, for he is non-different from Him and, consequently, He will be a victim to such evils as not doing what is good for oneself and doing what is bad for oneself."³⁷⁴ On the ground, therefore, of God being downgraded

374. *Śrī-bhāṣya*, II. 1. 21.

to the status of the finite individual, and falling a victim to ignorance and the imperfection caused by it, Rāmānuja says the *Advaita* view of God is an outrage on religious consciousness. "Deny all the attributes which God possesses with an absolute possession," says a Western writer, "and in the same breath you have denied ultimate meaning to our human notions of the Good. Make of God a finite being like ourselves, and you have accepted a theory of the universe which makes honour, beauty and intelligence, in any genuinely valid sense, 'impossible'." 375

In fact, all the dialectical difficulties which arise from the acceptance of the doctrine of two *Brahmans* spring from nescience being regarded as the explanatory principle of the appearance of the world and the finite individual. *Avidyā* is not the explanation of the appearance of the world in the original *Vedānta*. It infiltrated into *Vedānta* from Buddhist phenomenalism. And it is vitally important to note that any attempt to explain the appearance of the world and the individual self and even the strength and power of spiritual values, not by tracing them back to the nature of *Brahman* Himself, but by bringing in the category of ignorance *ab extra*, is tantamount to explaining the religious feelings of man by explaining them away.

Indeed, the adequacy of any philosophical system is to be judged by the attitude it adopts to the status of value in the world of facts. But if the theory of impersonal *Brahman* is defended in the manner of absolute monism, there is no place for them in its theoretical framework and religion turns out to be only a concession to ignorance. As Sircar points out: "The dynamic aspect of experience has found little or no value in Śaṅkara's philosophy". Its supreme stress upon the transcendent consciousness has led to the immanent aspect of experience being regarded as philosophically unsubstantial. In the result, "the humanistic tendencies and impulses of art, religion, beauty

and social sympathy have been delegated to the plane of immanent consciousness. These impulses, however lofty and noble, may have a value in the divided vision of life but have no place in the expansive undivided transcendent consciousness".³⁷⁶ He adds that an element of difference is retained by the Vaiṣṇavas, "a difference, not to indicate a division in the integrity of the Infinite (for even according to them, there is no difference but a distinction), but to allow the beatitude in love and service, the mutual giving and receiving, the love currents and responses." Such a conception of giving and taking has "no place in Saṅkara".³⁷⁷

It may be objected, however, that Saṅkara, the great dialectician, was himself a devout religious soul who had composed many moving verses in adoration of God. To this his famous *Bhaja Govindam* bears eloquent testimony. He has even commented upon the *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma*. It seems he is at pains to restore in the verses he composed in adoration of the gods and goddesses of Hinduism, the foundations of popular religious worship and devotion he had ruthlessly demolished in the iconoclastic dialectic he borrowed from *Mādhyaṃika Sūnyavāda*. There are in his writings references to Nārayaṇa and Vāsudeva which bespeak his feelings of devotion and surrender to God. If the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the allied religious literature speak with one voice and not with the double voice of religion and philosophy, then there is absolutely no basis for the uncompromising dualism between religion and philosophy which non-theistic monism sets before us. In fact, religion is higher than philosophy and the direct intuitive experience of God resolves all dialectical doubts. Rāmaṇuja's philosophy was a call to this direct encounter with God in which one can feel how there is nothing higher than what comes in religion.

376. M. N. Sircar, *Comparative Studies in Vedantism*, p. 62.

377. *Ibid.* p. 293.

As Bradey has said: "There is nothing more real than what comes in religion. To compare facts such as these with what comes to us in outward existence would be to trifle with the subject. The man who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness knows not what he seeks".³⁷⁸

But in the monism of Śaṅkara, however, the dualism of philosophy and religion and of the Absolute and God is unquestionable. It is the drift of what the great master earnestly and persistently argues and, if we judge Śaṅkara by his statements affecting the veracity of religious belief, there can be no escape from the conclusion that his doctrine veers round self-realisation as the essence of religion. But it was Rāmānuja's task to teach that self-realisation by itself is insufficient and that only when supplemented by God-realisation can it be treated as the supreme religious ideal. Religion, of course, is a complex spiritual activity, and it cannot be denied that knowledge of self is an indispensable preparatory or preliminary element in it. But religion is more than mere knowledge of self, because it is essentially the consciousness of God. Rāmānuja has this supreme standard of God-consciousness from the point of view of which he judges the adequacy and sufficiency of the doctrines he criticises. Hence he finds that the doctrine of the two *Brahmans* is undoubtedly an attack on the religious consciousness itself.

There were schools of *Vedānta* both before and after Śaṅkara which did not believe in any contradiction between the finite and the infinite, phenomena and noumena, unity and plurality, permanence and change, and reality and appearance. They interpreted the earlier *Vedāntic* literature, the *Upaniṣads*, by treating all their texts on an equal footing and not by adopting the dual standard of *paramārtha-satya* and *vyavahāra-satya*. They did not feel any need to reconcile the opposition between them,

because for them there was no contradiction at all between them. Thus, there was one Bhartṛprapañca who maintained that the texts of the *Upaniṣads* dealing with both unity and plurality were equally authoritative.

On the basis of what the *Upaniṣads* were believed to report without any sophisticated interpretation being put on them, Bhartṛprapañca held the view that reality is both one and many, both indeterminate (*nirguṇa*) and determinate (*saguṇa*.) That this was deemed to be an important interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* is evident from the fact that Śaṅkara considers it imperative to criticise it in his *bhāṣyas* on the *Vedānta-sūtras* and the *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. This means that prior to Śaṅkara hardly any attempt was made by any *Vedāntin* to interpret the *Upaniṣads* on the lines of absolute monism. It is to the singular credit of Śaṅkara that he made the valiant attempt to expound the teachings of the original *Vedānta* in strict conformity to the rigorous demands of the laws of identity and contradiction. But "the inclusion of an element of contradiction seems to be a sign of reality and of largeness of view rather than of error. The paradox of religion may be truer, in short, than the dilemma, the 'Either-or', of the logical understanding."³⁷⁹

But even after Śaṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa attacked the fundamental principles of atheistic monism. There are radical differences between the two, but the common error of both of them is that they sponsored the doctrine of imperfect God. Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa stand on an equal footing with Śaṅkara for the reason that the doctrine of imperfect God which they put forward is as cold and unemotional as that presented by *Advaita*.

379. Pringle-Pattison, *Idea of God*, p. 238.

V. The 'Bhedābheda' of Bhāskara

Both Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa oppose many of the cardinal principles of atheistic monism. They treat the world to be a real expression of *Brahman*. Reality, according to them, is not a principle of mere abstract identity, but is qualified by itself. There is no unity without multiplicity, nor any oneness without difference. *Brahman* is not indeterminate and without qualities and properties, but has infinite determinations and qualifications. *Jñāna* and *karma* are not opposed to each other, but are complementary. All actions, whether in the state of ignorance or after perfection, have to be performed with a selfless frame of mind. Liberation is achieved not by *karma* alone, nor by *jñāna* alone, but by the combination of both. These are the main teachings common to both Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa which bring them very close to Viśiṣṭādvaita. However, they are not able to reach that height of perfection and logical consistency which is the outstanding peculiarity of Viśiṣṭādvaita. They are merely approximations to Viśiṣṭādvaita, because the doctrines they propound, though very much in line with its mode of thinking, are yet unable to achieve that highest ideal of consistency which endows Viśiṣṭādvaita with its distinct status as a very important school of *Vedānta*.

It is necessary to underline such differences of these schools of *Bhedābheda* from the point of view of Viśiṣṭādvaita as arise from their conception of an imperfect God. Presented by both Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa, it shocks the religious consciousness no less than the *Nirguṇa-Brahma-vāda* promulgated by the *Advaita* of Śaṅkara. In many respects they are rather more ruinous to the religious sentiment than Śaṅkara's doctrine of *Nirguṇa Brahman*.

The cardinal error of Bhāskara's doctrine of the Absolute is that it is affected by a condition or limitation (*upādhi*) which is real and not false. In *Advaita*, *avidyā* is supposed to be false and negative. But the *Brahman* of Bhāskara is the victim of a

real *upādhi*. He maintains therefore that it cannot be completely eradicated, which seems to be the implication of the *Advaita* conception of *avidyā*. Bhāskara does not believe in the freedom and independence of the individual self. He explains the false appearance of the individual self by reference to an *upādhi* which is real. *Brahman* Himself, when conditioned by a real *upādhi*, is both bound and liberated. God cannot transcend the individual self, as there is no ontological difference between God and the individual soul. Conditioned by a real *upādhi*, God Himself becomes the individual self and appropriates to Himself all the impurities of the latter. But it is not only scripture that declares God to be perfect and free from all sin and weaknesses: but even religious consciousness makes the demand upon us that worship, adoration and surrender are possible only if God is a source of all values. It is from that fontal Reality that all our values are derived. But if God turns out to be no better than the individual self subject to transmigratory existence, so that the experience of bondage and liberation are true of Him no less than they are true of the individual self, then, in point of fact, it is not God but rather the individual self, the victim of so many weaknesses, that is presented to us as the object of religious worship. In *Advaita*, bondage is false; but according to Bhāskara bondage and liberation are both real experiences. Hence this doctrine which presents to us in place of God an individual self subject to the frailties and imperfections of the individual self, is a more severe outrage on man's religious feelings than *Advaita*.

Saṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādvaparakāśa are responsible for doctrines of God that are neither theoretically consistent, nor emotionally inspiring, nor even practically elevating and ennobling. The conception of the nature of reality has to be formed on the basis of experience: from human experience we can make a regress upon the nature of God as revealed in it. Our cognitive experience of the objects of the world stands on the same level with moral and religious experiences. Our

apprehension of fact cannot be said to be in direct contrast to our experience of value in the spheres of moral, religious and aesthetic experiences. Unless we hold to a mechanical view of the universe which is purposeless and the nature of which is taken to be determined in utter abstraction from human experience, we cannot hold as correct a view of God in which our highest aspirations are not fulfilled.

If God, as the *Upaniṣads* say and as the incontestable revelations of human experience tell us, is infinite existence, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss, the highest state of perfection, which is either identity with God or communion with Him, cannot be attained, if God is imperfect. There is a progressive decline in the standards by which the ideal of perfection is judged in the philosophical standpoints of Śaṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa. For Śaṅkara, *Nirguṇa Brahman* falls a victim to a false *avidyā*. Even if *avidyā* be false, the appearance of *Brahman* as false affects Its purity and perfection. Even false appearance in reference to *Brahman* is evil. But *avidyā* belongs to *Brahman*. It is not quite helpful to say that *avidyā* belongs to the individual self. If *Brahman* is the only reality, and the individual self is a false appearance of *Brahman*, the question is how *Brahman* appears to be the individual self. It is beyond question that the individual self is the product of the function of *avidyā*, and how else can *Brahman* individuate than by falling a victim to *avidyā*? *Advaitins* are not quite unaware of such glaring difficulties. They try to solve them by arguing that *avidyā* is false and that it appears to be real only to the ignorant. This cannot be said to be a cogent reply to the objection, because if the existence of the individual is explained in no other way than by the self-limitation of *Brahman* through Its involvement in *avidyā*, *Brahman* ceases to be the infinite and perfect being and turns out to be merely an individual self.

Bhāskara makes out that the condition of the individuation of *Brahman* is real. If this *upādhi* is real, then the bondage

of *Brahman* is also real. But *Brahman* is partless and inherently free from *avidyā*. But if *avidyā* victimises *Brahman* from outside, the imperfection incidental to such a process of individuation is inevitable. As the individuation and differentiation of *Brahman* are real, the evils and imperfections of *Brahman* also become real. *Brahman*, in the philosophy of Bhāskara as the perfect and infinite being and the object of religious faith turns out to be an unmeaning myth.

VI. The *Bhedābheda* of *Yādavaprakāśa*

Yādavaprakāśa abandons the concept of real *avidyā* or *upādhi*. Individuation is explained neither through *avidyā* which is false, nor through a real *upādhi*. Individuation is intrinsic and native to *Brahman*, which itself becomes the *jīva*. For *Yādavaprakāśa* all change and transformation is real. *Brahman* is subject to real change, is Itself a process, and differentiates Itself into the individual self. *Yādavaprakāśa* does not postulate any element in the nature of *Brahman* which is immune from change and transformation. In fact, change and transformation presuppose a changeless background. To say that *Brahman* is a process no better than the sea with waves and ripples is to deny that there is a permanent immutable eternal background behind change and transformation. *Brahman* is thus reduced to time and history, and hence the knowledge and worship of It cannot guarantee conquest over time which is the essence of emancipation and eternal life.

These drastic consequences can be averted by taking recourse to attributing power or *śakti* to an immutable *Brahman*, which Itself is not a victim of time and history. Its power it is that undergoes change and transformation. But this expedient of power or *śakti* cannot offer immunity from imperfection. The nature of this power or *śakti* has itself to be clearly determined. Is it an effect of *Brahman*? If so, where is the immutable background? *Śakti* or power cannot be an effect without *Brahman* undergoing real transformation or change. Even if the

alternative of *śakti* being identical with *Brahman* be adopted, the same difficulty crops up of loss of immutability. But if *śakti* be a different entity, then of course the Absolute would be free from any change or transformation in its substance. But the question that still remains is whether It is capable of self-differentiation. Yādava's contention that God, individual souls and Nature are the effects of the power or *śakti* amounts to the statement that they belong to the very substance of *Brahman*. They are neither due to false *avidyā*, nor to a real *upādhi*. Both difference and identity between *Brahman* and the individual self on the one hand and between It and the world on the other are real and ultimate.

Even in the philosophy of Yādavaprakāśa, one cannot meet with a satisfactory view of God. God is evidently less than *Brahman*, because He is part of Its self-differentiation. Yādavaprakāśa's God cannot be the first and final God of the universe. To say that God, like the individual self and the world, is the product of self-differentiation of *Brahman*, is to hold that God is a part or an effect of *Brahman*. Such a God, however, cannot be perfect, infinite and absolute. The Absolute, through Its own self-differentiation, draws upon Itself all the privations, imperfections and evils and also ignorance characteristic of the individual self. God is Himself affected by all evils and imperfections.

To say that only a part of God and not the whole of the being of God is constitutive of the individual, would prove to be of no help to get out of this difficulty. The Absolute transcends the individual. There is a part of It that is not affected by the imperfections of the individual. In that part *Brahman* transcends the imperfections and evils of the individual. That part is the abode of all perfections. Granted all this, we cannot see a real remedy. The alternative of granting to *Brahman* immunity from evils and imperfections by dividing Him into two parts, one transcendent and the other immanent, is equivalent to the absurd assertion that while one part of an egg can be eaten, the other

part can be preserved for laying eggs. What is partly perfect and partly imperfect is not all perfect. *Brahman* whose being is diluted with good and evil is hardly better than the individual self and ceases to be absolute God. He cannot be what religious consciousness invariably demands.

Although philosophy can interpret religious experience, its pronouncements cannot supersede and override the deliverances of religious experience. There can be no thinking in abstraction from experience. If any conception of the Ultimate Reality is to be formed, it can be formed only on the basis of human experience as a whole, of which religious experience is an inseparable element. Our moral, religious and aesthetic experiences cannot be divided from our cognitive experiences, because the former experiences are no less authentic revelations of the nature of reality than a mere conceptual or theoretical understanding of it. No meaning can be attached to the theoretical analysis of the nature of reality, unless we read back into it the values cognised by us in these higher levels of human experience. There can be no ultimate discord between philosophy and religion. That which is not ultimately real cannot be the real in moral, religious and aesthetic experience.

In Viśiṣṭādvaita there is no difference between philosophy and [religion, except that philosophy should direct its method of interpretation, assessment and criticism upon the revelations of religious experience. A penetrating and dispassionate understanding of the conceptions of God presented by Saṅkara, Bhāskara and Yadavaprakāśa convinces Ramanuja of the very absurdity of their points of view. God in Saṅkara is lower than the Absolute. If *Brahman* is higher in value, then God cannot be the absolute value. If *avidyā* is false, then there is no material difference between bondage and emancipation. In other words, if it is false *avidyā* that affects *Brahman* and the *jīva*, then, even though bound, *Brahman* and the *jīva* are free because *avidyā* is not there as a matter of fact. The state of bondage is the state

of freedom. But if *avidyā* is real and positive, *Brahman* cannot be perfect.

In Yādavaprakāśa God ceases to be a transcendent and perfect spiritual being. The very notion of spirit or *ātman* implies its freedom from mutation and change. There is a changeless immutable core or substance behind all mutations and changes. But Yādavaprakāśa reduces *Brahman* to a process in which the struggles of man's spiritual life cannot come to an end. *Brahman* is both born and dead in the birth and death of the individual. The lesson to be drawn from the doctrines of imperfect God is that there can be no alternative to the recognition of the ontological difference of God, the world and the individual self. The ultimacy and unity of *Brahman* have to be safeguarded. Religious life is shaped and disciplined by one principle. The world is not a fortuitous or mechanical aggregate of separate elements. Man's inner life also has to be ordered by one principle. The concept of absolute value is relevant to both morality and religion. Man's mind and heart cannot rest on so many principles. There can be no getting away therefore from a unitary spiritual principle at the root of the universe in terms of which alone, order, harmony and purpose in the world can be explained. "It is the presence of a Changeless Absolute", says Hocking, "that alone could set us wholly free to grow. For otherwise we would fix upon some concrete thing as a Changeless, something which ought to be for ever revisable, and then we must either stagnate, or break."³⁸⁰

But the very same intellectual demands require the ultimate principle to explain the world, because man has his existence in this world and his relation to it is organic. To say that the world has no existence and that the experience of difference and plurality is the same as the experience of many individuals by

³⁸⁰. W. E. Hocking, *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 187.

the dreamer in the dream is no explanation at all.³⁸¹ For it is subversive of the very criterion by which dream is distinguished from waking experience.

There is no escape from solipsism if *Brahman* is the only reality. As individual souls are no better than the ideas in the dream state, they do not have any reality. *Advaita* with its doctrine of the absolute reality of *Brahman*, cannot escape the charge of subjectivism and solipsism. Even dream experience is understandable only in terms of the standard provided by the waking experience. Monists cannot discredit the positive experience of the world of facts. Therefore, they are obliged to hold that *avidyā* is positive. But if *avidyā* is positive, monism is infected by the dualism of *Brahman* and *avidyā*. In Viśiṣṭadvaita, the world is real. If for *Advaita* the indeterminate, attributeless *Brahman* by Itself cannot explain the world and the *Advaitin* has to invoke *avidyā*, which is a veritable nest of so many difficulties and inconsistencies, why not hold instead that *Brahman* possesses *māyā* as His power through which He creates the real world? *Māyā* and the world are inseparable from God, and consequently such a doctrine becomes free from the defects of dualism. The recognition of the reality of the world has an advantage over *Advaita*, because it neither undervalues the infinitude of God, nor incorporates any element of dualism in the conception of God. The world is the product of the creative power of God which is inseparable from Him and is under the eternal command of His will. Similarly, *Brahman* can be perfect, only if the distinct reality of the finite individual is recognised. The existence and

381. Vedāntasūtra presents this view thus:

एकमेव ब्रह्माविद्याशब्दमेक एव जीवः । स्वप्नदृश वैकल्पैव तस्य भ्रमात् स्वप्नदृष्टपुरुषादय इवान्ये जीवाश्च प्रतिभास्यते । तस्य एकस्यैव अनिश्चितदेशविशेषस्थितेः अनिर्णीत कालेन भविष्यता तस्य ज्ञानजागरेण समस्तः प्रपञ्चोऽपि स्वप्नप्रपञ्चवद्भास्यते ।

Tatparyacandrika on the Gītābhāṣya of Rāmānuja, II. 18.

the status of the finite individual cannot be explained by holding that *Brahman* Himself becomes the *jīva* either by false limitation or real limitation or even real change. The reality of the personal, individual selves in their own right contributes to the enrichment of the being of God rather than to its impoverishment. But the individual draws his existence from and is always sustained by God. Though distinct, yet he is inseparable from God. Hence all the difficulties that one encounters in Śaṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa are swept away by the doctrine of reality enunciated in Viśiṣṭādvaita.

VII. *Buddhism and 'Advaita' in Historical Perspective*

The three schools of *Vedānta*, namely, the *Kevalādvaita* of Śaṅkara and the *Bhedābheda* of Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa on the one hand and the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja on the other, are not only attempts to interpret scriptures according to the philosophical points of view which they maintain to be the final explanation of the nature of reality and experience, but are also responses to the pressing needs of the different epochs in which they flourished. The evolution of Indian religious thought in the light of the interpretation of the *Vedānta* in these three schools should be viewed not only chronologically, but also logically. Perhaps there is a grain of truth in the statement that philosophical developments emerge from the hard soil of experience only to overcome the difficulties in presenting an intelligible account of their credentials. Metaphysical, epistemological, aesthetic, moral and religious experiences cannot be divided in watertight compartments, nor can their distinctive features be reduced to one single uniform pattern, as seems to be the one common motive of the subjectivistic, nihilistic, sceptical and naturalistic tendencies in contemporary philosophy

Philosophers in our day are prone to forget that it is human experience that they are called upon to interpret and explain. The question is not why human experience is what it is, but rather what the conditions are which bestow upon it the

character that it does possess. But human thought moves in a circle and it is very difficult to prove that a philosophical doctrine is absolutely new and original and has been propounded for the first time in the history of human thought. It is only the obstinacy and dogmatism involved in the refusal to learn from history that can be said to be original. Modes of thinking having their origin in antiquity may make their appearance subsequently in different cultural settings: and it is their newness and freshness arising from these different circumstances that may endow them with the false appearance of a new problem and bestow on their solution the semblance of originality. Many of the philosophical problems discussed and solved in these *Vedāntic* schools have re-appeared in modern thought and have attracted the attention of modern thinkers who, just for the sake of the display of their originality and the consolidation of their points of view, tend to take shelter in exactly the same types of arguments as have been already put forward by other thinkers in polemical battles.

Contemporary thinkers refuse to study and reflect upon the ancient lore, lest perhaps they should be upset after finding in them the answer to the intellectual riddles they formulate in their own way of expression. The problems and their solutions appear to be new only because of the new surroundings in which they are presented.

It is now our intention to show how the whole of contemporary thought is a reversion to some of the old doctrines already exploded by some of the brilliant thinkers of antiquity and how the moderns had better learn from them. In India, the transition from Buddhism to *Advaita* was signalled by a period of great intellectual ferment, as exhibited in the dialectical debates held between these two schools on the one hand and between Buddhism and other Indian schools of thought on the other. All such problems as are the subjects of current philosophical thinking have been discussed in the period between the progress and decline of Buddhism and the rise of *Advaita*. Yet such

issues as were later tackled by both Buddhism and Sāṅkara grew out of the needs of the times. Buddhism was born to face the crisis of faith when religion had hardened into dead and fossilized dogmas of rituals and sacrifices, which were taken to constitute the whole content of religious life. Religion is not departmental and, since religious experience permeates the whole of our being and experience, the identification of it with only one part, dimension, or aspect of it, can result only in its distortion. This is actually what happened at the time of the birth of Buddhism. Morality is an inseparable content of religion, though religion is more than mere morality. Morality is what furnishes the outward standard of the strength of religion. Moral degeneration tends to sap the vitality of religion. *Vedic* religion, therefore, tending to exhaust its contents in mere sacrifices and rituals, needed purification. Buddhism is a reform in the *Vedic* religion itself. The problem which confronted Buddha was that of giving moral content to the *Vedic* formalism. Thus, Buddhism was born to meet a genuine need of the times. Early Buddhism by which we mean the original teachings of Buddha, is basically and fundamentally ethical in its nature and content. It is commonly held that Buddha was non-committal on metaphysical issues. This may be so, because he either did not question the system of traditional metaphysical beliefs or just repudiated them as being unnecessary for right living.

What Buddha's own views with regard to the main metaphysical assumptions were, it is difficult to say with any amount of certainty. It was long after Buddha died that his teachings were canonized and systematized by his followers who introduced a good deal of sophisticated metaphysical subtilty and hair-splitting logic into them. The differences among his followers in the course of the development of Buddhism become so pronounced and uncompromising that they were grouped under four schools of realism and idealism. It is this later development of Buddhism into four philosophical schools that we find referred to and attacked by *Vedāntic* thinkers in their

commentaries. It may be allowed that later Buddhism modified the original teachings of the master a great deal. But it cannot be denied that there is an indissoluble link between early Buddhism and later Buddhism. The moral emphasis in early Buddhism seems unmistakably to be grounded on the impermanence of the world and transience of mundane values. The denial of a permanent eternal ego and of the reality of the world may consequently be regarded as a direct logical development of the negative orientation of the emphasis on the moral values of life. Buddhism taught that there can be no incentive to seeking the values of the world, if there is neither on the subjective side a permanent eternal ego, nor on the objective side a real world for the attainment of which one could not help being selfish to the core. The annihilation of selfishness is the essence of goodness. But the practice of goodness is conditioned by the elimination of the ego. The twin doctrines of the negation of the ego and the falsity of the world constitute the metaphysical framework of later Buddhism. Scepticism and atheism were the direct consequences of this pessimistic and negative orientation in Indian thought.

But ethics, separated from metaphysics, is a trunk without a head. If actions have moral quality and their consequences recoil on their agents, which is what Buddha designates by the name of *Dhamma* and which for him is the absolute, rather the Ultimate Reality itself, then the reality of a permanent eternal ego cannot be called into question. There is no real agent of any action, if the ego is no more than an aggregate of momentary conscious states. The law of *karma* is the expression of this basic assumption of the conservation of ethical values. But, without belief in a permanent ego, it is impossible to explain the Buddhist belief in reincarnation. This is one of the weakest points of Buddhism and Buddhist philosophers cannot by any subterfuge render their belief in *karma* and rebirth consistent with their rejection of the self. On the other hand, the recognition of the sovereignty of the moral law is a clear recognition of the reality of the world, because what else do we mean by

the world than an objective system of facts, phenomena and events which create an environment for the fructification and dispensation of the moral deserts, that is, for the rewards and punishments of actions, good or bad, done by individuals? But Buddhism, in its negation, on the subjective side, of a permanent self and, on the objective side, of the world, lapses into nihilism. It is this nihilistic attitude that was the occasion for the birth of the *Advaita* of Śaṅkara.

The nature and extent of Śaṅkarācārya's contribution to Indian religious thought can be grasped only against the background of the Buddhist thought. As in the case of other schools of thought, so also with respect to the *Advaita Vedānta*, Buddhism provides not only a chronological but also a logical background. The establishment of the reality of the self as a permanent eternal background of experience is the distinctive contribution of his philosophy. The nihilism of later Buddhism, which was the logical outcome of Buddha's negative attitude to life and the universe, was bound to receive a fatal shock from *Advaita* philosophy. Buddhism set the problem of the self before thinking minds specially in the context of the reconciliation of the conservation of ethical values with a permanent eternal principle. If moral values are eternal and if the sequence of cause and effect in the moral sphere is the unalterable law, then where else can its sovereignty be felt as a matter of direct, immediate experience, than in some principle of being in the human personality, if not in the outside world? It was the question, therefore, of an imperishable, immortal, eternal principle in the personality of man that was the burning problem of the transitional period between Buddhism and *Advaita*.

If we therefore concentrate our efforts on the understanding of the true genius of the monism of Śaṅkarācārya in the perspective of the problem it was called upon to solve, then we can say that it was not so much the question of personal God, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world, the object of

personal devotion, worship and surrender, as that of the eternal self within man to which one could address oneself. The basic problem one was confronted with was that of a principle which could supply the basis of man's faith in the conservation of moral values. The emphasis on inwardness in Buddhism could be vindicated only by the substitution of the permanent eternal self in the philosophy of *Advaita* for the mechanical aggregate of the changing conscious states. *Advaita*, therefore, is more a system of ethics than of metaphysics, because its emphasis falls on what the real nature of man is and what his ultimate destiny is, rather than on any reality ontologically different from and higher than the self of man. *Advaita* and Buddhism can, therefore, be regarded as developments in the same line of thinking of which they are respectively the positive and negative counterparts. *Advaita* substitutes a permanent eternal self for the Buddhist doctrine of changing conscious states, because there is no point in talking of an objective system of moral values and of their conservation, if reality is nothing but a flux of changing states. If everything is momentary, fragile and transient, then moral values also are bound to disappear into nothingness. Hence, if the question were asked what gives *Advaita* a unique place in the history of Indian religious thought, it is its supreme emphasis on the self as the eternal principle in which all moral values are conserved.

VIII. Purpose of 'Vedānta' in Śaṅkara & Rāmānuja: Morality & Religion

In thus suggesting that Śaṅkara's philosophy is oriented to ethics rather than to metaphysics, we do not think that we are distorting the teachings of *Advaita*, because it is definitely the moral problem to which we are introduced as being the one single problem of *Vedānta*. Thus, the purpose of *Vedānta*, as set out in the opening sentences of the preamble to Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*, is unquestionably the establishment of the identity of *Brahman* and the *ātman*, of the

individual self with the Absolute. This, of course, is not a matter of our explicit awareness in our consciousness, because our whole life is, as it were, affected by the universal illusion which makes us identify the body with the soul, the spirit with matter, the subject with the object, resulting in the attribution of the properties and characteristic features of the subject to the object and of the object to the subject, which attribution is the root cause of our misery in the world. The ethical problem that arises here is one of knowing the true nature of the self, leading to the final and absolute cessation of all our sorrows. All evils originate from the false identification of the spirit with matter and of the body with the self, so that, until this confusion is dispelled, the true nature of what even pleasures and pains are, cannot be known.

So, it is the highest ethical ideal of the perfection of the individual soul or the realization of the true nature of the self that is the one of object and motivation of the *Vedānta* of Śaṅkara. Śaṅkara himself attacked the *Mīmāṃsakas* for their contention that the *Vedas* have nothing to do with the knowledge of the nature of reality and that their content and meaning are exhausted in ethical injunctions and prohibitions. But what meaning can we wring from his preamble to the *Vedānta-sūtras*? Does he not think there is nothing to worry about, if this problem of the ethical perfection of the individual self is solved?

Such an aim, however, involves the knowledge of the ultimate reality. But, for Śaṅkara, there is no reality higher than the self. *Brahman* and *ātman* are for him the designations of one and the same reality. *Brahman* does not transcend the *ātman*. There is no place, therefore, in *Advaita*, for any transcendent principle in the accepted theological sense. The proposal to treat the self as ultimate reality is undoubtedly a call to understand experience by immanent categories. The recognition of the self as something distinct from and transcendent to the psychophysical organisation and structure of the human personality is certainly the admission of its difference from the body, the

mind, the senses and so on. But *Brahman* is the designation of the same self. Transcendence and immanence do not, therefore, carry the same meaning in *Advaita* as they do in ordinary theological discourse. Transcendence here has no reference to any principle different from the self which transcends the senses and the mind in human personality. There is nothing real besides *Brahman* by reference to which Its transcendence can be understood.

Mahendranath Sircar brings out this point about Śaṅkara forcefully and clearly: “*Brahman* transcendent is consciousness and bliss, *Brahman* immanent is the consciousness in infinite modes, the consciousness of all consciousness. *Vedāntism* is Transcendentalism with an appearance of Pantheism, because this ‘*pan*’ is not real to the *Vedāntin*—it is *theos* throughout, there is no ‘all’. It starts with the proposition that ‘all’ is *Brahman*, and subsequently finds ‘all’ vanishing away in the fullness of Being”.³⁸²

The philosophy of Rāmānujācārya stands on a level different from that of *Advaita*. The self is an immanent principle, but experience cannot be fully explained in terms of a principle that is merely immanent. The nature of finite experience is such that it cannot be its own explanation. Neither human experience, nor the experience of the world can be adequately understood in terms of principles that are immanent in them. The finite cannot be its own explanation. Even though the self in man transcends the physical, biological and mental levels of being, yet it cannot by itself explain the varied nature of human experience. In fact, there is no experience of anything finite as such. The finite is always experienced together with the Infinite, because if it is true that the effect is never known without

382. M. N. Sircar, *System of Vedāntic Thought and Culture*, p. 105.

that which gives it its being and is therefore revealed in it, then it cannot be said that the Infinite is not revealed in the finite. The finite individual is not isolated from the Deity, because the latter is revealed in the very texture of its being.

The *Upaniṣads* again and again focus attention on the finite nature of the individual self and say that since its very existence is derived from *Brahman*, he who treats God to be non-existent, ceases to exist. Being in the *Upaniṣads* is to be invariably understood in terms of the *Ātman* and *Brahman*, because seeing or desiring has been attributed to them. The *Upaniṣads* draw a clear line of demarcation between the Infinite and the finite and teach that the latter has its explanation in what is trans-finite.

The purpose of *Vedānta* for Rāmānuja is, therefore, different from that of *Advaita*. He ascribes a metaphysical or religious purpose to *Vedānta*. Metaphysics for him has no meaning apart from theology, because it is the latter that gives content to the former. Thus, in contrast to Śaṅkara's statement, that the purpose of the *Vedānta* is the experience of the identity of *Brahman* and *Ātman*, Rāmānuja says: "The purpose of all the *Vedānta* texts is to intimate the intuition of *Brahman*, who possesses innumerable auspicious qualities of unsurpassed excellence, by bringing about the full manifestation of the nature and character of the individual self which in its turn is the result of the worship of God and the knowledge of His nature and character, who is the inmost ruler and controller of the self which is different from the body, with a view to effecting the absolute annihilation of the *jīva*'s unavoidable fear of worldly existence caused by its false attachment to the four kinds of bodies, the heavenly such as those of gods like *Brahmā*, the human and those of birds and immobile living beings, into which

its ingress is forced by the stream of *karma* consisting of merit and demerit, the offspring of beginningless nescience ".383

For the non-dualistic *Vedānta*, since the self is the ultimate reality, the Absolute, *Vedāntic* inquiry does not proceed any further beyond the boundaries of self-realization. But for Rāmānuja, *the self is not the absolute or ultimate reality*. Hence, the object of *Vedānta* is to impart the knowledge of the true essence and character, not only of the self as distinct from the body, but also of God, the Supreme Person who is different from it. Non-dualistic *Vedānta* stops short with self-realization, but Rāmānuja maintains that self-realization is fulfilled and becomes a meaningful experience only in God-realization, because the self is utterly incapable of knowing its true nature and character, until it comes to know that it depends upon God and exists for the realization of His purpose. It may be admitted, however, that non-dualistic *Vedānta* is oriented to self-realization only as a preparation for the worship of God. Morality completes its circuit of stress and strains in religion.

It may be asked what plausible reason can be assigned for the sharp difference between *Advaita* and *Viśiṣṭādvaita* and the purposes which they set before us as being the teaching of *Vedānta*. Both these systems of thought claim their allegiance to the triple foundations of *Vedānta*, namely, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. The answer that might be given is

383 जीवात्मनोऽनाद्यविद्यासञ्चितपुण्यपापरूपकर्मप्रवाहहेतुक्रमहादि-
सुरनरतियक्स्थावरात्मकचतुर्विधदेहप्रवेशकृततत्तदात्माभिमानजनिता-
वर्जनीयभवभयविध्वंसनाय देहातिरिक्तात्मस्वरूपतत्स्वभावतदन्तर्यामि-
परमात्मस्वरूपतत्स्वभावतदुपासनतत्फलभूतात्मस्वरूपाविभक्तिपूर्वका-
नवधिकातिशयानन्दब्रह्मानुभवहापने प्रवृत्तं हि वेदान्तवाक्यजातम् ।

Vedārthasaṅgraha, p. 1.

the same as that which explains the diversity of philosophical systems, whether in India or elsewhere. They are not born as mere products of abstract thinking, having no concern with the social surroundings which, as a matter of fact, provide them with the congenial environment to press upon them the solutions of the problems that emerge from them. It is in the context, therefore, of the changing cultural settings that we can adequately appreciate the contributions they make to civilisation. These answers, just because they make their appearance in particular historic epochs, cannot be said to be of mere transient value. As one looks at the history of civilisation and the rise and fall of nations, does history seem to exhibit a fixed course of events, determined as it were from outside as by an external fate? Rather, it is to be understood primarily, basically and fundamentally as the record of the manner in which man uses his freedom to make decisions at critical moments. The decisions which man makes and the conclusions at which he arrives to meet the demands of his social life, have eternal significance, because the possibility of the same problems making their appearance at subsequent periods cannot be ruled out. The march of events is neither completely lineal, nor completely cyclical. The different accounts of history that have been offered are really complementary, and the same is true also of the growth of philosophical and religious ideas and opinions. It is in this light that we may appreciate the contribution of Saṅkara and Rāmaṇuja to the growth of Indian religious thought. Therefore, *Advaita* and *Viśiṣṭādvaita* have both to be appreciated against the background of the cultural setting in which they made their appearance on the intellectual scene.

Considering the impact that the completely nihilistic philosophy Buddhism sponsored was apt to exercise on the mind of man and its moral precepts which flowed from it and robbed him of all enthusiasm, vigour and zest for life and the values of the world, the metaphysic of self which was

advanced by the *Advaita* of Śaṅkara may be considered to be the only effective answer to the challenge the intellectual leaders of his time were called upon to face. Belief in the existence of a permanent eternal self is the basic assumption of Hinduism. It is the self as the permanent eternal reality in the personality of man that bestows on him a dignity and status in virtue of which he commands his superiority over the other lower levels of being. The value, therefore, of the *Advaita* of Śaṅkarācārya springs from the solid contribution that he has made to Indian religious thought by demonstrating by means of powerful dialectic the reality of such a self in the absence of which all talk about the moral uplift of man is but a futile play of words.

The meaning and importance of this approach to the problem of the self can be understood also in the light of similar developments in Western thought. It is evident that the critical idealism of Immanuel Kant and the Absolute Idealism of Hegel were born to meet the challenge of the philosophical scepticism of David Hume. Hence if Buddhism can lay claim to the inauguration, as it were, of an era of revolution in the field of morals in the history of India, it was certainly self-defeating in its purpose, because it was difficult to think of the conservation of moral values in the absence of the reality of a permanent eternal self and an eternal background also at the root of the universe. Buddhist ethics, therefore, was based upon a false philosophy. The higher standard of morality that Buddhism demanded was felt by the intellectual leaders of that time to be completely at variance with Buddhist phenomenalism. Perhaps, the heated prolonged debates between Buddhism and the orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy at that time and the conclusions that came out of them are pregnant with meaning for the progenitors and adherents of the contemporary movements of thought in the West. Śaṅkara achieved admirable success in his attempt to prove that neither the illusory world nor the experiences of the individual, are what the Buddhists

considered them to be, but are rather sustained by a permanent eternal background, so that without it the noble moral ideals of Buddhist thought could not be understood and the mind of man could not find satisfaction in such paralogsms and antinomies as were bequeathed by the Buddhist thought to posterity.

It is plain that the task of the rehabilitation and renewal of the age-old orthodox ideals in the sphere of religion and metaphysics was only too incompletely accomplished. Human experience in all its levels and forms cannot be its own explanation. Moreover, man is not merely an ethical animal, but even in his moral obligations he catches the glimpse, faint and feeble though it may be, of the Infinite which is inextricably embedded in his being. It is impossible for man, if he takes care to reflect upon himself and upon his surroundings, to adhere to a point of view which, when worked out to its ultimate consequences, leads him to a kind of solipsism. Emphasis merely on the reality of the self in its utter abstraction from the external environment of the world and of the fellow human beings results ultimately in the imprisonment of the individual self in the narrow circle of its own ideas and thoughts which have no connection with the outer world of other fellow individuals. Hence the philosophy of self cannot, in the ultimate analysis, prove to be a complete and perfect philosophy of life, because it casts aside other equally important problems and issues, which can throw light on its nature. In other words, the philosophy of self is not a complete philosophy of life, because the self in its own right cannot be treated as ultimate and as capable of answering many other questions which are inextricably involved in understanding its complex nature and character. As we have observed already, there were many violent protests against the abstractions of absolute monism at the hands of the exponents of the *Bhedābheda* schools of *Vedānta*. They express their inability to follow the explanations of absolute monism in regard to such problems as those of the

relation between the Infinite, the One and the many, unity and multiplicity, abstract identity and concrete identity, the dilemma and dichotomy of the indeterminate and determinate, *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa Brahman*, the status of the world and of the individual self, the doctrine of the false appearance of the world and of the individual self, the means to the attainment of liberation, and the relative value of *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti*. Attempts were made by them to effect a synthesis between the contrasted points of view that absolute monism had suggested with respect to the validity of the ethical and moral and religious intuitions of mankind.

The schools of *Bhedābheda* put forward their own conclusions which are not very much opposed in principle to the philosophy of Rāmānuja. But the emphasis they placed on the changing nature of the Deity, their lamentable failure to preserve for the Deity Its transcendence as against Its immanence, seemed to Rāmānuja to be more derogatory to the nature of the Deity than subjection to *avidyā*. In a true conception of God to whom devotion and worship can be addressed, transcendence and immanence must be balanced by each other. What needs to be emphasised is their correlation and integration, because if the emphasis falls on either of the terms of the relation, the result proves to be disastrous to the formulation of an adequate idea of God. Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa laid emphasis on immanence, but they carried this tendency to the extent of identifying God with time to such extreme limits that they were not able to preserve for God an aspect in His nature which was free from the mutations of time and change. God, subject to time and change, cannot guarantee freedom from time and change—which is the destiny of the individual. The schools of *Bhedābheda* were short-cut solutions of the problems of philosophy and religion, no less encumbered with theoretical and practical difficulties than absolute monism. They made heroic attempts to interpret the scriptures in accordance with their own points of view, but they could not do justice to the

transcendence of God and His immunity and freedom from the accidents of time, change and history, which is no less important a feature of the transcendent character of *Brahman* than His being the immanent eternal background of the universe.

A careful and unprejudiced study of the *Upaniṣads* unmistakably drives home the conclusion that they have presented a balanced view of the nature of God. The *Upaniṣads* may be taken to be both revealed scriptures and gallant and fruitful exercises in the sphere of natural theology. It is not *Brahman* as an *a priori* concept with which they start their investigation. The *Upaniṣads* are replete with accounts of heated discussions and debates conducted by kings and philosophers on the nature of the self in man and of God in the universe. As one patiently and critically pursues one's study, one can find that it is human experience that they are all anxious to understand in terms of such concepts as God and soul. There is always, therefore, progress made from the understanding of the nature of the world and human experience to the intuition of a transcendent principle which can enable us to understand them. It is not, therefore, quite a correct estimate of the *Upaniṣads* to treat them simply as revealed scripture. The accounts they give of the nature of the Ultimate Reality and of the self, are attempts to understand man and his place in the universe. The selves are intellectually aware that the first reality they are confronted with is the world in which they are placed and it is from the questions pertaining to its nature that they pass on to the questions pertaining to the principle embedded in it. They all seem to hold to the view that if there is a principle involved in the universe it cannot be unknown to us, because if the part belongs to the whole, it must give us some hint as to the nature of the whole. One cannot claim omniscience as to the nature of the principle involved in the world. But unless, in some form or other, the principle is known to us, we cannot raise questions as to its nature. In so far, therefore, as this transcendent principle explains the universe and human

experience, we can say that our questions enable us to know explicitly what in our ordinary consciousness we know only implicitly; and it is exactly this, namely, rendering our knowledge of the universe, of the human experience and of the principles involved in them clear, consistent and systematic that can be said to be the task of metaphysics. The *Upaniṣads*, therefore, perform the same function from this point of view as metaphysics is supposed to do, and it can be said in their favour that in their own distinctive way they do increase our knowledge. Hence, in all strictness, it may be said that there is no watertight difference between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori*, nor any between the inductive and deductive methods of knowing reality, seeing that they are interdependent and that one presupposes the other.

IX. Theistic Orientation of Vedānta

If the *Upaniṣads* insist over and over again, following the procedure of natural theology, that there is a principle at the heart of the universe of which we possess some knowledge, though vague, the attempt to establish the reality of the principle immanent in the world in its utter detachment from that in which it is immanent or the persistent zeal to establish its superiority and ultimacy over everything else so as to identify it with the whole of reality must be self-defeating. One may be so overwhelmed by the idea of the Infinite that in the attempt to prove that It is ultimate, either It may be identified with everything else or everything else may be cancelled for the sake of It. But the *Upaniṣads* do not make this mistake and, if they insist on getting away from difference and multiplicity as such and reduce it to unity, they also teach how unity is revealed in multiplicity. *Brahman* is that from which all things come, but It is also that to which all things return. The difference between *Brahman* and the things which It transcends and in which It is immanent, has been emphasised in terms of such similes as that of salt dissolved in water, of the bee and honey, of the waters of the rivers and the sea and so

forth. Such analogies are designed to teach not the identity of *Brahman* with all things, but their ontological difference in spite of the immanence of *Brahman* in them.

It is in the light of such solutions of the complicated philosophical problems that one has to estimate the contribution of the *Vedāntic* teachers to an authentic interpretation of the philosophy of *Vedānta*. In the philosophy of Rāmānuja, all the problems with regard to the nature of the Deity, the nature of the individual self and their mutual relations appear to have received adequate attention and emphasis, so that we cannot be far from truth if we say that it is the philosophy of balance, harmony, synthesis and proportion as against the philosophical opinions of his predecessors who laid undue emphasis on this or that side of philosophical and religious problems.

Even though all the schools of *Vedānta* claim to be expositions faithful to the *Upanisads* and formulate on their basis tenets about God, man and the world, for a dispassionate observer they are open to critical assessment. This in its turn calls for a first-hand study of the texts themselves. It is not proper to look upon the *Upanisads* as the records of consistent philosophical thinking. They are rather frank and honest affirmations of the religious experiences of the seers. In all the *Upanisads*, it is their belief in the existence and reality of one Universal and Personal Mind, immutable and perfect, free from the mutations of time and change and yet immanent in them and controlling them all, that is frequently emphasised

The seers of the *Upanisads* were in search of such a God as could reasonably demand their allegiance, worship and adoration in virtue of His being ultimate and perfect. It was a demand for a principle which was at the same time the source of all reality and existence and also the abode of infinite perfections. They laid stress, therefore, on His intrinsic freedom from the imperfections of the world and of the individual self. The seers

do not stop short with merely affirming their belief in the existence of God, but inquire if He possesses all perfections and is immune from all imperfections to which the world and the finite individual are subject. There is no point in the search for God if He is not adequate to the demands that the individual makes upon Him. It is therefore the question of a God, perfect and absolute, to whom not only can all things be traced back, but who reveals Himself also in Nature and history. It is such a perfect being on which they concentrate their thoughts. We cannot think of the problem of the Deity in the *Upanisads* in abstraction from the values of which It is the source. Even without commentaries, one familiar with Sanskrit language can decipher the real drift of their teachings.

It is necessary to remember that all the *Upanisads* do not agree in their teachings. In the present as well as in the foregoing chapters we have followed the procedure of judging the *Upanisads* in the light of their texts. The central question of religious consciousness with which they are all deeply concerned is that of a personal God. By 'personal God' is meant that ultimate source of the world with whom personal contact can be established and with whom our relations can be such as exist between us and our fellow beings. Only a God who is self-conscious and not a self-contained, bald, abstract and solitary centre of being can fulfil the spiritual needs of the religious man.

The conventional opinion about the *Upanisads* is that they are monistic without any qualification or reservation, that they deny the existence of the world and advocate the doctrine of the impersonal Absolute, the individual self and the world being only modes of Its existence or mere expressions or appearances projected by *avidyā*. The *Vedānta-Sūtras* are traditionally held to be a systematic digest of the teachings of the *Upanisads*. Some are persuaded that while the monism of the brand of Śaṅkara's *Advaita* is the teaching of the *Upanisads*, the *Brahmasūtra* supports theism. This view is untenable, because

according to the traditional Hindu thought there is no contradiction between the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtra*. One has to take account of the problem of the continuity of the *Upaniṣads* with the *Vedānta-Sūtras*. This is a matter of vital importance, because the way in which this question of the continuity of the *Upaniṣads* with the *Vedānta-Sūtras* is tackled, determines the view we may take of the spirit of their teachings.

But, if what has been said in the preceding chapters is borne out by the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, the current opinions as to the *Vedāntic* view of reality cannot be taken to be warranted by them. It has been seen that it is theism rather than abstract monism that can be held to be the core and essence of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*. Attempts have also been made to see if there is any strength in the view that God's connection with the world and the individual self can be explained by His subjection to an external *upādhi* or by the unmediated involvement of His being in them. In so far as the religious consciousness makes a regress upon God from the world and the experiences of the finite individual for the purpose of seeking their explanation, the principle adequate to this requirement must be eternal. There is, therefore, the question of the relation of God to time or of eternity to time. Religious questions, since they relate to all the departments of life and all provinces of human thought and experience, cannot raise any issue about God without being confronted by other kindred problems concerning the status of man in the scheme of things. Hence the very fact that the principle which it seeks must be the final explanation of all that it seeks to comprehend leads us to the conclusion that it must be ultimate. But it is not an impersonal, theoretical explanation of all that man experiences that he seeks, because his experiences are not absolutely impersonal. They are deeply personal and shot through with the experience of truth, goodness and beauty. Hence that which is ultimate should be both theoretically and practically adequate to the demands of the religious mind. It must not

only be the theoretic, ultimate explanation of all things, but It must also be perfect and good. It is only a perfect God that can guarantee our freedom from all the imperfections and sorrows that are the ineradicable features of our empirical existence. God's involvement in time and history is nothing short of an outrage upon the religious convictions of man and the denial of the security that they demand. Taking into account both the theoretical and practical demands, and the kindred problems of philosophy and religion, we do not think there is any justification for the dualism and sharp contrast between philosophy and religion.

Judging the comparative merits of Sāṅkara and Rāmānuja from the standpoint of the dualism of religion and philosophy, we may say that while Sāṅkara stops with his proclamation that the universe is not self-sufficient, that it is a mode of the appearance of the Absolute and that without the Absolute we cannot understand it, Rāmānuja adds content to that abstract principle and tries to understand it in terms of human experience. The overmastering instinct for the Infinite is common to both, but the Infinite of the former satisfies only the theoretical impulses of man. That is why V. Subrahmanya Iyer makes out that Sāṅkara's *Vedānta* is pure philosophy and that its purpose is not to answer the religious needs of man.³⁸⁴ This is borne out by Sāṅkara's writings. But we do not see how, human experience being what it is, philosophy can afford to be anti-religious. If at all philosophy comprehends all our experience, in which value experience is a necessary element, then how can there be a philosophy of mere abstract concepts? If philosophy be no more than this, would there be any difference between it and science?

384. Professor A. R. Wadia says that V. Subrahmanya Iyer of Mysore "has been trying to show that genuine philosophy must be independent of religion, that in Sāṅkara himself the *Śeṣa Brahman* or a personal God is only a part of the phenomenal (if not illusory) world, and that the *Nirguṇa Brahman* is the only reality and has nothing to do with religion." (Iyer and Others, *Radhakrishnan: Comparative Studies in Philosophy Presented in Honour of His Sixtieth Birthday*, p. 96, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1951).

But if philosophy cannot cast aside the concrete experiences of man and if it is committed to the task of giving a rational justification of them, then there can be no irreconcilable contradiction between philosophy and religion, because it is one and the same human experience in the light of which both investigate the nature of reality and also assign a purpose to such an investigation. Rather it is the latter that is the impulse for former.

X. Hinduism and the West

It is common knowledge that philosophy and religion in India are not diametrically opposed but pass imperceptibly into each other. This constitutes a sharp contrast between the East and the West. In the West, thinking has concentrated itself mainly on the inquiry into the nature of the world. It is from philosophy, therefore, pre-occupied with speculations regarding the nature of the world, that there has been a progress made into the sphere of religion. Western philosophical systems are mainly intellectualistic, realistic, pragmatic, and anti-mystical. Indian philosophy, on the other hand, is mystical, idealistic, acosmic and individualistic. It is often described also as pessimistic. This contrast has been so frequently emphasised that it seems to erect an unbridgeable barrier to the understanding and appreciation of both the East and the West. Any synthesis of the East and the West seems impossible. In our day however the world has shrunk to a small nook, and all nations, though separated from one another by barriers of lands, mountains and oceans, have become neighbours. This situation presses itself upon the minds of the intellectual leaders all over the world. It is certainly at a heavy cost to the future of mankind that we can be indifferent to the mutual understanding and appreciation of the foundations of thought and life at the root of the Eastern and Western cultures. Paying this cost is not inevitable, as there has been a colossal misunderstanding between the East and the West.

Each makes an unqualified claim that the system of its beliefs and the foundations of its living are the only final truth, and shows a deliberate indifference to the appreciation of other systems of thought and life and their achievements in the course of history. Political dominance of one race or country by another has been in no small measure responsible for this apartheid between the nations of the world. It would be too optimistic to hope for the advent of an era of peace and progress with complete eradication of the fear of war and for the spontaneous awakening to the urgency of mutual co-operation and sharing of ideals by merely digging into the cultural heritage of both the East and the West. Human nature cannot undergo radical transfiguration and man cannot be God. None the less, a concerted effort for the appreciation of the cultural foundations of both the East and the West will help in easing the tensions that cast the shadow of the threat of war affecting even the destiny of those who believe in peace.

The comparative study of religion and of the fundamental principles which control the thinking of the East and the West seems in our day to pave the way for mutual understanding. This method will solve our problems and contribute to the elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance from the world. If man is at the centre of every thing and if it is man rather than the external environment that stands at the root of both war and peace, then one has to concentrate one's knowledge and insight first on human nature and then on the world in which one is placed. If the minds and hearts of men are sufficiently regulated by them, the manifold problems will take care of themselves.

It is a good augury for mankind that the comparative study of religion has been started in many of the outstanding academic centres of the world. Not a few European and American universities have opened departments for the study of Eastern religions. In India, the study of Western culture, religion and civilisation covers a major part of academic curricula.

It is through the comparative study of religion and of the parallel philosophical doctrines developed both in the East and the West that one can fruitfully get to a definite conception with regard to the genius of each. Emphasis on such disciplines and the methods of study of the theoretical framework of the way of life in the East and in the West can point out errors in thinking and contribute to growth and enrichment by co-operation in thinking and sharing of ideals. The comparative method should be adopted as the only effective one for the study of our cultural foundations and for the realisation of the goals of life. The evolution of systems of thought can be a subject of fruitful study, only if we are able to interpret them in relation to one another and correlate them with our social conditions. It is ultimately the latter in which the history and explanation of their genesis are to be found. We can sift conceptions and ideas, norms and ideals of life which have local and transient importance from those which have permanent value and significance. Such a method can also throw light on many problems that have attracted our attention, and concentration on them is likely in due course to bring about tangible consequences in the determination of the true spirit of the outlook distinctive of certain communities, groups or nations.

For a student of philosophy and religion who has adopted the comparative method, the radical difference between the Western and Indian modes of thinking is a matter of tremendous significance, because if there are areas in which we can hope to profit from one another, there are many principles in respect of which it is obligatory for us to come together. If consistent thinking is honoured and respected everywhere, then it cannot be that we may not come to a point where we all agree. It is by such a method of collaboration in thinking that we can become aware in retrospect of our drawbacks. It is just possible that peripherals become central in a religious system.

“To say that a certain principle is presupposed if the religious attitude is to be justifiable is not to say that all

religions carry out the principle consistently. A religion can very well be inconsistent with its own fundamental principles in certain subsidiary dogmas maintained by it or by some of its adherents. People can have all sorts of inconsistent attitudes without being in fact worried by the inconsistency.”³⁸⁵

The question is therefore of a system of beliefs that can be rationally defended and made compatible with all the demands of moral and religious experience. To say that there are certain matters in which intuitive truth is the only guarantee of certitude is of no help, because even such a claim has to be defended by rational thinking. It is on questions of the existence and nature of God as personal and impersonal and of man's relation to Him that India and the West are divided from each other.

“*Brahman*, the pantheos of India, though equal to the Christian God in majesty”, says Sir Charles Eliot, “is really a different conception, for he is not a creator in the ordinary sense: he is impersonal, and though not evil, yet he transcends both good and evil. He might seem merely a force more suited to be the subject-matter of science than of religion, were not meditation on him the occupation, and union with him the goal, of many devout lives. And even when Indian deities are most personal, as in the Vishnuite sects, it will be generally found that their relations to the world and the soul are not those of a Christian God”³⁸⁶

Hinduism with its origin in pre-historic times and with its bewilderingly complex structure and multiplicity of beliefs and practices, is certainly a very difficult subject of study, especially for one who endeavours to study it from outside. The prevailing opinion among Westerners that Hinduism is nothing but

385. A. C. Ewing, *Non-Linguistic Philosophy*, p. 253.

386. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. I, p. 9.

pantheism and that there is no room in it for a personal God and the freedom of the individual and the reality of the world is undoubtedly a very unfortunate one. The fault is ours. For political domination apart, it is we that are responsible for giving currency to such opinions and for securing for such misconceptions irrevocable warrants and sanctions in our scriptures. It cannot be denied that a watertight division between the East and the West in such matters is the source of an impassable psychological distance between both which cannot be removed by making temporary adjustments in economic and political spheres. It is the difference of outlook that is the fundamental question, because it is ultimately how we think about such problems that determines our dealings with others.

A more sympathetic and intensive study of that side of Hinduism which brings India closer to the West and to the Western philosophical and religious thinking is the greatest desideratum of the hour. It has been my object in this work to focus attention on such matters as bring India closer to the Western theological thinking, the basic religious concepts of which are the personality of God and of the human ego and the reality of the world and of personal and ethical values.

The misconception in the West with respect to the Indian attitude to life derives from the gross error of mistaking Hinduism for only a part of it. The complex character of Hinduism is still inaccessible to the foreigner. Unless he studies it from the inside, a judicious estimate of it is not possible. Such a mistake is likely to be made even by an orthodox Hindu who proceeds to understand Christianity from outside without intimate acquaintance with its philosophical and religious doctrines, its beliefs and practices and its codes of personal and social ethics. The complexity of a religion like Hinduism or Christianity is undoubtedly an obstacle to a correct appreciation of its ideals. In spite of admirable efforts on the part of Western Orientalists in the nineteenth century and later,

only a small portion of Hindu scriptures has come to the knowledge of the inquisitive Western mind. The difficulty of the language in which the doctrines are expressed is another great impediment to sympathetic appreciation. There is a close relation between language and thought, and without penetrating into the very genius of the language of a nation, a balanced judgement about its philosophy, religion and culture will prove very difficult. There are subtle distinctions in thought introduced by the Hindu mind, and for all these minutiae, terms have been coined which are unfamiliar to the Western mind. Hindu thought is not analytic in that it has not ever restricted its interest to this or that side of the problem of life, but has first looked at life itself as a whole and then for a better understanding has concentrated on its diverse elements. Where, therefore, even analysis and synthesis are not conceived in watertight compartments, it is very difficult for one not familiar with this peculiarity of the thinking of the Hindu mind to appreciate its outlook on all important aspects of life and thought. This is the strongest reason for the failure on the part of the Western mind to understand and appreciate it in the perspective demanded by its complex character.

Fortunately, many Western scholars have been able to hit on this distinctive mark of Hinduism. They are now acutely aware of the genius of Sanskrit language and have remarked that over-simplification of Hinduism as a whole in terms of watertight divisions dictated by the application of the formal laws of thought can only prove to be a veritable source of misunderstanding and misconception. G. W. F. Tomlin writes: "Immersion in Oriental philosophical writing over a period of years has led the author to believe that much of its attraction for Western readers resides first in its exotic terminology and secondly in its apparent and to some extent inevitable vagueness. Words such as *Nirvāṇ*, *Karma*, *Vedānta* and *Māyā* produce, it seems, an effect very much like hypnosis, above all, perhaps upon those to whom their meaning is unknown. Admittedly,

few ideas of this order can be rendered into English with the precision demanded by Western philosophers for their own concepts.....If, as Patanjali maintained, there are thirty-six forms of consciousness, or as Kapila maintained, twenty-five 'realities', we are bound to miss endless subtleties of meaning by rendering their thought in the half-dozen terms available at most in English".³⁸⁷

The large-scale misunderstanding of the genius of Hinduism may thus be due to the difficulties in getting an insight into faiths other than one's own. The understanding of Hinduism in the perspective only of *Advaita* is certainly unwarranted. Hence the over-simplification of taking atheistic monism to be standard Hinduism is not legitimate. It encourages one to magnify its pitfalls to claim finality for one's religious outlook and to establish that the whole life of the Hindus has been a failure: instead of Hinduism having a message for the world, it is asked to learn from the West.

The contrast between the East and the West as regards their respective attitudes to God and the world and man's relation to them are so radical that no rapprochement between India and the West seems possible. Indeed, such differences in the matter of religion and God are not of academic importance only; they exert a profound influence on social and political thinking and the functioning of social, economic and political institutions. Thus, whether a people adopt the democratic or the communistic pattern of living may depend upon whether in their opinion the individual is an image of God or whether he is a mere accident of Nature. The kind of religion and the philosophical outlook that shapes and moulds the thinking of a nation does exercise its impact on the way it manages its affairs in all the spheres of its activity. In the present-day world, the conflicting ideologies

387. *Great Philosophers of the East*, P.14, Arrow Books, London, 1959.

of democracy and communism are only the natural consequences of the Western and Eastern modes of thinking: and by the East, we mean in this context the nations to the east of West Germany, constituting or influenced by the communist block.

P. J. Saher puts it thus : "It can hardly be denied that the ideological difference between Western and Eastern Europe centres in its essence on a difference in economic theory and practice. All other differences can be traced to this origin: the relatively pro-laissez-faire West as compared to the relatively anti-laissez-faire Eastern Europe. This is the greatest event in the history of economic development since the Industrial Revolution.....In both, however, the State acquires exaggerated powers and the individual loses his identity in a sea of identities. In this new religion of technocracy, the individual's thought and life are put under continual psychological pressure. Man, made in the image of God, is supplanted by man made in the image of his passport or identity card,..... The individual is only a citizen, and what is only a citizen, and what is one amongst so many ?".³⁸⁸

If in Hinduism the ultimate destiny of the individual is either extinction or absorption, as he is but a manifestation or a mode of the existence of the Impersonal Absolute, then it can leave no room for his existence in his own right and there will be no point in making claims for individual rights and privileges. The individual has to become nameless, a dead non-, intelligent part of the gigantic machine that the State or the Government is. But, if the individual is a spark of the Divine, an image of God with a freedom and dignity which not even the omnipotence of God can undermine, then they will be enthusiastic about the organisation of their social and political life by means of democratic institutions in which it is rather the individual who determines the State and the Government and

not the State and the Government which, instead of being a trustee to look after the welfare of the people, tyrannise over the people. If, therefore, we make such distinctions in the social and political sphere between India and the West, we might be tempted to think that the basic philosophical and religious outlook which dominates the thinking of the Indian people is not in keeping with the spirit of democracy. But such an estimate of Hinduism is certainly a gross misconception, and the eradication of such an error is among the purposes to which this study of the philosophical and religious genius of Rāmaṇuja has been directed.

Hinduism is not pantheism and, judging it by the standards of the practical faith of the Hindus, we cannot contest the truth of the conclusion that it is theistic through and through. "It is widely known in India," says Rabindranath Tagore, "that there are individuals who have the power to attain temporarily the state of *Samādhi*, the complete merging of the self in the infinite, a state which is indescribable. While accepting their testimony as true, let us at the same time have faith in the testimony of others who have felt a profound love, which is the intense feeling of union, for a Being who comprehends in himself all things that are human in knowledge, will and action. And he is God who is not merely a sum total of facts, but the goal that lies immensely beyond all that is comprised in the past and the present."³⁸⁹

Much sophisticated thought characteristic of non-theistic monism may no doubt be alluring and attractive to the educated microscopic minority; the fact remains that theistic beliefs impregnate the thinking of the majority of the Hindus and form part and parcel of their religious life. Atheistic monism can, therefore, be said to be rather an exception to the general rule

³⁸⁹. *The Religion of Man*, p. 128, George Allen & Unwin Paperback, London, 1963.

than the one single, exclusive philosophical and religious doctrine to which all Hindus may be supposed to adhere.

The dialectical development of philosophical systems, one superseding another, is not a purely arbitrary affair, as has been so dexterously shown by Hegel. The evolution of non-*advaitic* schools of *Vedāntic* thought and culture can be understood only as effective steps taken to show that the implications of monistic *Vedānta* were neither supported by scripture nor consonant with the demands of religious consciousness. The volume and extent of the philosophical output in protest against the contentions of monistic *Vedānta* cannot be passed over in silence, for their appearance on the Indian intellectual scene for several centuries has to be accounted for only as a fitting and appropriate response to philosophical and religious needs. A. C. Ewing has pointed out that "those who insist that God must be regarded as impersonal still have to talk in personal terms if they are to convey any meaning.....Hence the necessity of using the conception of personality in thinking of God. If we use personal relations at all, it is then a question of degree how much we insist on their analogical or metaphorical character, so that there is no clear dividing line between a personal and an impersonal view of God" 390

It is vitally important to note that just because the Hindu mentality categorically refused to acquiesce in acosmic and pessimistic doctrines grafted on Hindu scriptures that the exponents of monism had to face the challenge of the successive schools of *Vedānta* spearheaded by Rāmānuja. All the non-*advaitic* schools of *Vedānta*, despite their differences, are united in their efforts to prove that Hindu scriptures do not teach the doctrine of the Impersonal Absolute, the falsity of the world and the extinction and absorption of the individual: they

390. *Non-linguistic Philosophy*, pp. 254-5, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1968.

expound the doctrine of a personal God with love as His essential character, the reality of the world and the dignity of the individual whose destiny is the worship and love of the Deity who not only dwells in his heart but also rules the world which is His symbol and expression.

Having regard to the vigour and zest of the non-*advaitic* *Vedāntic* teachers in raising their voice against the interpretation of the tripod of *Vedānta* (*prasthāna-trayi*) on the lines of pantheism and non-theistic monism and also the powerful hold that the religion of worship, devotion and surrender exercises on the Hindu mind, it is not appropriate to interpret Hinduism unreservedly in the light of a single school of *Vedānta*. This is a mistake to which even some of the brilliant and intelligent students of Indian thought have succumbed. The texts of the scriptures need not be made completely subservient to contemporary modes of thinking. It is true that the need of readjustment in the exposition of scriptures arises from time to time to face challenging situations and this calls for efforts to shed new light on them and lay stress on one side or other of the problems dealt with them. But these adjustments are only temporary and local, and they cannot constitute the whole content of the scriptures. Such elements have always to be distinguished from those that are of eternal and universal significance and value. There are, doubtless, certain permanent elements in all scriptures of all religions which are independent of the changing circumstances of life. We might say that there is religion as such which finds expression among all the religions of the world.

This permanent element is the belief of all mankind in a Supreme Omnipotent and Benevolent Deity. There are many fashionable definitions of religion, emphasising the complex nature, constitution and organization of human experience. It is open to any one endowed with gifts of intelligence to twist and distort the meaning of a term to suit one's tastes. In our

philosophical and religious literature. Traditional concepts are subjected to minute analysis in order to make them cohere with the principles and assumptions of linguistic empiricism. The result has been disastrous, being nothing short of a serious menace to civilisation. Thus, the content of religion is taken by many contemporary Western philosophers and theologians and also by their Indian votaries to be completely exhausted in morality. It is for them nothing but a commitment or a policy of action or an involvement. Religion has been dragged down to immanent categories. It has hardly anything to do with any principle or form of being transcending the human situation. Humanism has become another name of religion and they speak of religion without God. Atheism and religion were commonly supposed in the past to be mutually contradictory, but nowadays there seems to be no definition or understanding of religion except in terms of atheism and secularism. Even in Christian camps, we hear of what is called religionless Christianity or Christianity adapted to secular needs, as bolstered up, for example, in Paul Van Buren's *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*.

That the view advanced in such sensational writings is the product of their own fertile imagination and of their desire to swim along with the current of the times is quite evident. The Gospel may be interpreted in such a way that its teaching may be shown to be relevant to our contemporary needs. But when the secular meaning of the Gospel becomes its only meaning, it is not the Gospel that is presented to us in its true character, but rather the secular orientation of particular theologians themselves. There can be no ambiguity about the drift of the teachings of the Gospel or of the *New Testament* and therefore, with respect to the emphasis of the Christian religion.

The fact, however, that they have been made to yield a meaning which is quite repugnant, antithetical and hostile to their intention has to be reckoned with.

One is at liberty to misrepresent and distort the spirit of Indian philosophy as gleaned from the vast corpus of its literature with a view to extracting a view that suits one's taste or that can be assimilated to modern secular tendencies of thought prevalent in the West. But the texts speak for themselves. That each of the schools of Indian philosophy has its own history and has passed through many stages of development is beyond all dispute. Nor can it be questioned that some of the orthodox schools of Indian thought give unmistakable evidence of the tremendous impact exercised on them by the rationalistic and atheistic tendencies preponderant at specific periods. The *Sāṅkhya* and *Mīmāṃsā* are acknowledged to be atheistic. But the *Sāṅkhya* does not so much openly deny the existence of the Supreme Mind as assert that His existence cannot be proved by means of the accredited sources of human knowledge. That God does not exist has nowhere been stated by Kapila. The mere assertion that the existence of God is not proved does not amount to atheism. Moreover, the *Sāṅkhya* philosophy has passed through many stages of development, and it would be an unwarranted oversimplification to generalise that it is atheistic. The *Sāṅkhya* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa is not so much concerned with the accomplishment of the negative task of proving atheism as with the discriminative knowledge of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*—which is really part of and preparatory to the knowledge of God.

All the Indian philosophical systems are engaged in the realization of a common end which is the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality for which each specializes in a particular discipline or knowledge subsidiary to it. *Vedānta*, or *Brahma-mīmāṃsā*, or the critical discussion or investigation of *Brahman* or God comes at the end of the whole course of the requisite intellectual training to which all other schools of philosophy lead. As the different sciences specialise in selected areas of Nature, so the different schools of Indian philosophy divide the critical inquiry into *Brahman* into a number of complementary standpoints or *darśanas* and restrict the scope of their

thinking and methodology to parts or fragments of knowledge leading ultimately to the attainment of the wisdom about God. Hence each of the schools of Indian philosophy should be judged by the extent of the contribution it makes towards the knowledge of Ultimate Reality.³⁹¹

Max Muller has pointed out that the atheism of Kapila differs from other atheistic systems in that "Kapila nowhere puts himself into a hostile attitude towards the Divine idea." The founder of the *Sāṅkhya* does not deny the existence even of the purely mythological gods, such as Indra. "Nor does he enter on any arguments to disprove the existence of one only God. He simply says — and in that respect he does not differ much from Kant — that there are no logical proofs to establish that existence, but neither does he offer any such proofs for denying it. We know that Kant, honest thinker as he was, rejected all the logical proofs of the existence of Deity as insufficient, and based the arguments for his belief in God on purely ethical grounds. Though we have no right to assume anything of the kind with regard to Kapila, when brought face to face with this great religious and moral problem, the existence of a supreme God, we ought to mark his impartiality and the entire absence,

391 V. J. Janakiah says:

ब्रह्ममीमांसाया ईश्वरप्रतिपादनमेव मुख्यमुद्देश्यं तत्र विशेषेण ग्रन्थारम्भत आरभ्य समाप्तिपर्यन्तमीश्वरस्यैव प्रतिपादनम् । तस्य तदशे बाधे शास्त्रस्यैवाप्रामाण्यपातप्रसङ्गः । यस्य शब्दस्य यदुद्देश्यं तदेव तस्य शब्दार्थ इति ब्रह्ममीमांसायां केवलमीश्वरप्रतिपादनस्यैव शास्त्रकतुरभिप्रेतत्वात् । सांख्यशास्त्रस्यापि पुरुषार्थसाधनारम्भसाक्षात्कारोपायस्वरूपं प्रकृतिपुरुषविवेचनमेव मुख्यमुद्देश्यमितीश्वरप्रतिषेधांशे बाधेऽपि न तदप्रामाण्यं प्रकृतिपुरुषविवेचनस्यैव मुख्योद्देश्यत्वात्, यस्य यदुद्देश्यं तस्मिन् सिद्ध एव तदप्रामाण्यात् इति ।

in the whole of his philosophy, of anything like animus against a belief in God. ”³⁹²

Sāṅkhya philosophy as expounded and elaborated in the *Mahābhārata* recognizes the existence of God as the twenty-sixth principle distinct from the twenty-five acknowledged in *Īśvarakṛṣṇa*'s *Sāṅkhya*.³⁹³ *Vaśiṣṭha* further remarks that it is through the knowledge of God, the twenty-sixth principle, that the finite self is able to know non-intelligent Nature and that even after attaining that knowledge, it will continue to be an *ignoramus* if there is no knowledge of God.³⁹⁴

The *Mīmāṃsā* philosophy which believes at least in gods and lays stress on the sovereignty and supremacy of the moral law in the universe, cannot be supposed to be oriented to the atheistic outlook. It is instructive to note that, according to orthodox tradition, *Jaimini*, the author of the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*, was the pupil and not a rival contemporary of *Bādarāyaṇa*. *Jaimini* quotes *Bādarāyaṇa* five times (I. 1. 5; V. 2. 19; VI. 1. 8; X. 8. 44; XI. 1. 64): while *Bādarāyaṇa* refers to *Jaimini* ten times (I. 2. 28; I. 2. 31; I. 3. 31; III. 2. 40; III. 4. 2; III. 4. 18; III. 4. 40; IV. 3. 12; IV. 4. 5; IV. 4. 11). *Jaimini* has high regard for *Bādarāyaṇa* and has not refuted his position anywhere in the whole course of his philosophy. *Sābara* (5th cent. A.D.) identifies the view of *Jaimini* as that of *Bādarāyaṇa* in his commentary on I. 1. 5.³⁹⁵ *Jacobi* has opined that the two *mīmāṃsās* ‘formed but parts of the same treatise’.³⁹⁶ According to *Max Muller*,

392. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, P. 303, Oxford, 1890.

393. *Śāntiparvan*, *Mokṣadharmā* Section, 308. 7.

394. *Ibid.*, 308. 17.

395. See also *Sābara on Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*, XI. 1. 64.

बादरायणग्रहणं बादरायणस्येदं मतं कीर्त्यते बादरायणं पूजयितुं
मात्मीयं मतं पर्युदसितुम् ।

396. *Journal of American Oriental Society*, December, 1910,

“Jaimini would not make the Lord responsible for the injustice that seems to prevail in the world, and hence reduced everything to cause and effect, and saw in the inequalities of the world the natural result of the continued action of good and evil acts. This surely was not atheism, rather was it an attempt to clear the Lord from those charges of cruelty or undue partiality which have so often been brought against Him. It was but another attempt at justifying the wisdom of God, an ancient Theodicee, that, whatever we may think of it, certainly did not deserve the name of atheism.”³⁹⁷

The contention, therefore, that Hinduism is merely a way of life and not also a metaphysic, is wholly unwarranted and no more than a cheap generalisation. The six philosophical schools are an organic growth and should be judged in the perspective of their culmination in *Vedānta* which alone represents the *Weltanschauung* of the Indian people. The complex structure of Hinduism which embraces all types of faiths and disciplines, forbids all attempts at oversimplification. No pronouncements upon its character can be taken to be true without reservations.

397. Max Muller, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 211-2.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The percentage of people taking pains to learn the Sanskrit language has never been high. Added to this is the indifference to Sanskrit on the part of the Indian people even in the post-independence period. That during the foreign rule the knowledge of our ancient traditions and cultural heritage should recede into the background was understandable. The rulers were keenly interested in establishing their superiority in all the departments of human thought and activity to the subject people ruled by them. Christian missionaries began to pour into the conquered land with the sole object of proving their superiority in the spheres of religion and culture. A detailed treatment of the history of the spread of Christianity in India after the British rule was established, will carry us far afield. Suffice it to remark here that their prejudiced approach to the religion and culture of the Indian people was the source of large-scale misunderstanding which struck deep roots even in the minds of Indians. Slaves both culturally and intellectually to our conquerors, we seldom cared in those days to dig into the treasures of our ancient heritage. Enthusiastic patronage to Western culture and religion, coupled with the indifference of the Indian people to a first-hand study and understanding of their religion and culture, proved to be an insurmountable barrier in the way of getting insight into the true genius of our national mind.

The history of Indian religious thought is a long one. It starts indeed in pre-historic times about which we have insufficient information. The results of the Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa excavations which have brought to light the images of

Hindu gods and goddesses like Siva, Kali and Durgā push the history of Hinduism far back into antiquity. This is certainly a promising feature of modern research in the field of Indian religious thought. That Hindu thought, in its earliest beginnings, must have been monotheistic rather than polytheistic becomes a matter of assured certainty. But, so far as the historical records of Indian religious thought available in the *Vedic* literature are concerned, their exposition and interpretation by both foreign and indigenous writers have left enough scope for further research. The opinions advanced by them, more often than not, do not seem to square well with the tradition and culture still living in the life of the people. It is difficult to obtain the correct perspective so as to be able to pronounce any opinion in this matter. This requires a comprehensive and intelligent insight into the history of the pre-historic people and their beliefs in the secular and spiritual spheres. Moreover, Indian religious thought has evolved through so many distinct stages and is a product, therefore, of many interrelated influences.

This indicates how hard a task it is to give an account of it which may be regarded as immune from the possibility of misinterpretation, biases and prejudices. The common mistake that a superficial student is likely to make is that of oversimplification. In such a vast land as India which is a sub-continent in which all the religions of the world are well represented and where the diversity of philosophical and religious opinion has been traditionally respected, it is easy to form misconceptions about the true attitude of the people, and of the system of beliefs entertained by them. The changes in social conditions and needs and the demands of the different epochs in which religious opinions have proliferated cannot also be left out of account. The historian of the evolution of religious thought, whether in the East or in the West, has to be alive to the interaction between social conditions and religious beliefs. A dispassionate student has to disentangle the permanent and the universal from the transient and local elements in the religious

thought of the people concerned. Religion being an all-embracing human activity, there is no department of life which can be left untouched by it. Though religion is not the product of social conditions and circumstances, the way in which man expresses his experience of God bears the unmistakable mark of the epochs through which it makes progress. Both the historians of religious thought and theologians have to judge and evaluate the data available.

In our enquiry so far, we have concentrated upon the necessity of both religion and philosophy as equally important and complementary needs of the human spirit. India has been hailed by Max Muller as the land of philosophers and also as the place of the confluence of all the religions of the world. 398 Philosophy and religion are inseparable so that the error of separating them from each other is the error either of separating life from philosophy or of philosophy from life. The contemporary situation in the world of philosophical opinions is alarming and ominous. University departments of philosophy in many parts of the world and the so-called philosophers also are busy putting forward a view of philosophy which altogether disassociates it from life.

The Indian attitude, however, to philosophy and religion is synthetic and liberal, because it does not draw a hard-and-fast line of demarcation between them. This is true of the entire history of the evolution of religious ideas from their earliest beginnings in the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*. Both religion and philosophy spring from the reason of man, and man as a rational being in exercising his reason comes to form a conception of the Ultimate Reality and also of the ways and methods of establishing an emotional and practical relationship with it. There is no ground, therefore, for distinguishing between philosophy and religion, except for making the point explicit

398. *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 7.

that what the former tries to understand theoretically, the latter appropriates to the practical and emotional sides of the being of man.

There is hardly any metaphysics that does not pass into and fulfil itself in theology. This does not mean, however, that philosophy is religion and religion is philosophy, because it cannot be admitted that reason in its theoretical use is the same as reason in its emotional and practical dimensions. The mind works through reason in both its cognitive and its practical and emotional aspects. Philosophy is the product of the exercise of the theoretical reason, whereas religion is the product mainly of the exercise of the emotional and practical reason. There is distinction between them, but this distinction is one of emphasis only on this or that side or dimension or function of reason and not of any such exclusive character of either, as keeps them in non-communicating and antagonistic compartments. In other words, they can be distinct, but can never be separated. Indian philosophers and theologians had a profound awareness of this intimate relation between philosophy and religion. Only the *Cārvāka* materialism could not, because of its materialistic attitude to life, develop a religious creed and a code of morals. All other Indian schools of thought are not merely theoretical enquiries into the nature of the Ultimate Reality, the principle to which all forms of being can be ultimately reduced or of which they may be considered to be expressions or manifestations. They also, in accordance with the formulation of their views in this matter, set out a graduated scheme of the way in which man can establish his relation with it and have the cosmic power in his favour; and lay down also norms of conduct by following which he can both appropriate the powers and capacities of the Supreme Being to himself and also establish a cordial, amicable relationship with fellow human beings in the community.

Life is one, and any speculation about its different dimensions has to be centred on it. Hence it is only a matter

of methodological convenience that they can be separated. As, however, this one and the same life with its purposes needs goals and ideals with which man must be concerned, there is absolutely no justification for creating barriers between philosophy and religion. The Indian mind tends to synthesis, because it has looked at life closely and penetratingly and intelligently and has not cared to divide its problems. This makes it easy for us to understand how while Indians did not lag behind other races and nations of the world in scaling great heights of philosophical thinking, their contribution to religious thought and their insights in the spheres of moral experience are also certainly unparalleled.

I have pointed out in the first chapter how this close relation between philosophy and religion is a characteristic feature of Indian philosophical thinking and how, therefore, Rāmānuja cannot be regarded as a mere theologian in the pejorative sense of the term. This widespread misconception about the place of Rāmānuja in Indian philosophical and religious thought has to be dispelled.

It may be remarked in this connection that the relation of philosophy to religion is the relation of form to matter. As there is no form without matter, no form which has not already a content, it is a mistake to think that there can be philosophy without its background in religious experience. I have examined in this context the views of many Western philosophers and theologians who maintain that philosophy can supplant and supersede religious faith which has been with man ever since he opened his eyes at the time of his birth in this world. Croce, the Italian idealist, for example, has argued that religion is immature philosophy and that, with the growth and maturity of man's power of reflection and reasoning, it must pass into philosophy. When it is ultimately stripped of its mythological elements, it must become philosophy pure and simple. This was the predominant opinion of the eighteenth-century philosophers. Theology or philosophy or religion, as I have emphasised more

than once, is only religion or consciousness of God brought to self-consciousness.

The consciousness of God is with all of us, but we never care to understand it with the result that, even though as a matter of fact we believe in God unconsciously, we pretend not to believe in Him and profess ourselves sceptics and agnostics. We cannot escape the consciousness of God. No man is an atheist, because everybody does acknowledge the existence of some power on which he depends and by which he thinks that the world and all the forms of being are sustained. The function of philosophy is only to make this consciousness explicit and clear, so that it may permeate one's entire being and make him a new man. The viewpoint of a man unconsciously believing in God changes radically, when he analyses his consciousness of God and extracts from it all the implications which have a bearing on his emotional and practical life.

Some claim that religion is exempt from philosophical analysis and criticism, and are acutely critical of the bearing of reason on religion. They maintain that articles of faith are completely destroyed by discursive reason. For them religion is fundamentally a matter of faith, and the demand that all elements of man's moral and spiritual life should be rendered transparent by reason is absurd, because such a view takes it for granted that all the intellectual powers and faculties of man are exhausted in the senses and the mind. But man as a spiritual being is not only the senses and the intellect, but also a spirit which transcends these.

William James and Lord Balfour, among many other such thinkers, have endeavoured their best to root religion in the will of man and have urged that reason has nothing to do with faith. On the other hand, there are other thinkers who maintain that man is essentially a rational animal and, therefore, nothing which is not intelligible through reason, nothing of which the truth is not confirmed by the verdict of the intellect,

can command our homage. Such thinkers place the claims of reason in the forefront of philosophical thinking. If man is a rational being, there is no escape from the recognition of reason is absolute. They proceed that reason cannot be recognised as absolute without sweeping away all claims for faith, as reason can leave no room for faith. These two views are one-sided, because they arise from the mistake of dividing the human mind into watertight compartments and from taking an inadequate view of reason in man.

It is certainly beyond all dispute that man alone can be religious. Religion arises from the self-consciousness of man. We cannot say that dogs and cats can be religious, because in them reason does not possess the nature and character that is the hallmark of man. It is reason in man that is the source of his religion. Now, if religion, like all other interests of man, springs from his reason, there cannot be an unbridgeable gulf between reason and religion. Hence, on the one hand, we have to guard ourselves against the error of thinking that faith cannot be an object of philosophical criticism and evaluation and, on the other, that rational intelligence is destructive of faith or religion. Just because it is from reason that religion springs, religion which cannot be rationalised and which is not such that a philosophical criticism and analysis of it cannot bring out the principles underlying it, is likely to wither away and lose its hold on the mind of man.

We must not forget that the history of religious thought both in the East and in the West bears witness to the fact that the more faith is rational and the more it submits itself to philosophical criticism and is rendered intelligible in terms of philosophical categories, the more stimulating and enduring it becomes. The history of Christianity and Hinduism demonstrates clearly that the strength and vigour each of these religions possesses is due to their collaboration with philosophical criticism. No defence of any religion can be made by making it immune from such criticism. Religion will

have only a truncated and perverted development, if reason is not allowed to exercise its power on it. Hence the claim that reason is destructive of religion has to be dismissed. The proponents of this view forget that religion pervades all human interests, so that if it is exempted from philosophical analysis and interpretation, it will be isolated from other human interests and will become a concern of the mere individual and will tend to get fossilized and die out.

Philosophy does not originate religion or belief in God. Man first believes and then he brings his reflective thought to bear upon what he believes and examines the nature and object of his belief and seeks the manner in which to express his belief. Man is a rational being and, although in the first instance the operation of his reason in knowing anything is unconscious, yet he cannot avoid turning the reflective movement of his thought on what he knows only unconsciously. Hence it is certainly wrong to say that faith is entirely a matter of uncriticised opinions and that the only function of reason is destructive. It is true that when man allows his conscious thought to bear on his belief in God and many other items of his faith, they do not continue to influence him in the same crude or obscure manner as before. There is a good deal that he now removes from his faith. The earlier uncriticised faith is no longer a matter of mere mythology, but of the universal principles that underlie it.

Reason is helpful in making faith philosophical, redeeming it from its local and temporal elements and raising it to a level of universal meaning and value. The narrow patriotic Hebrew religion turned itself into the religion of the prophets which contains universal elements. Judaism, thus, was considerably transformed by the influence of Greek thought on it in becoming universal in spirit. It is only by allowing the self-conscious, reflective movement of thought to turn upon faith, that religion comes to be an all-encompassing experience and a permanent feature of man's emotional and practical interests. Hence faith

has nothing to be afraid of, so far as the effect of the exercise of reflective thought on it is concerned.

The other mistake of making reason absolute, so that it may be allowed to eliminate altogether man's beliefs, is equally untenable. Eighteenth-century thinkers vigorously argued in favour of the absolute supremacy of reason. Thus understood, reason tends to be destructive of faith. Many suggest that reason can be a substitute for religion. The results of the exercise of reason upon faith must be negative, and one may be compelled to hold the view that faith is nothing but an irrational belief and that it has its source and centre in the imagination and feeling of man rather than in anything for which there can be unimpeachable evidence. Thus the eighteenth century gave rise to Deism which had hardly any religious element in it. Spence in the next century went to the extent of saying that there is a clear-cut dividing line between what man knows and what he will be never able to know. He reserves the sphere of the knowable for science and relegates religion to the lumber room of the unknowable. But if reason or science on the one hand and religion or faith on the other are so divided from each other, religion cannot be a powerful influence in human life. Abstract thought can be no substitute for the living power and function of religion. It cannot have the capacity for transforming man's imagination and his passions.

Reason abstracted from life must lead to agnosticism. Men are apt to slip into the error of thinking that reason is barren and powerless to evaluate and understand religious beliefs. It is not the prerogative of reason to deal with the higher moral and spiritual interests of life. Religion and reason, as we have shown, are complementary elements in human experience. Man's belief in God, in the first instance, is not the product of deliberative reason in the manner in which the steps of a mathematical sum or the premises of a syllogism determine its conclusion. Those who either oppose faith to reason or reason

to faith are carried away by a very narrow view of both faith and reason. If religion springs from reason, yet in the first instance it is not from the conscious reason that it springs.

Reason is both conscious and unconscious, and there is not a single rudimentary form of perception or knowledge in which the activity of reason is not involved. The pioneers of Greek philosophy, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, thought that mere feelings and sensations do not constitute knowledge and that it is only when reason organises them that it becomes possible for us to perceive any object. Hence reason is both unconscious and conscious. We first know all things unconsciously, and it is only a subsequent exercise of reason that make us conscious of their implications. No one, for instance, needs knowledge of the principles of philosophy to perceive an object. We cannot say that we know the cause of a thing only when we are able to know what the principle of causality implies. It must be admitted that religion as belief in the existence of God and the emotional and practical attitude towards Him must be acknowledged to be unconscious at the beginning. And because thus religion springs from reason, albeit from the exercise of it which is unconscious, our knowledge of it must be refined and transformed to a conscious form.

It is philosophy that makes our awareness of God conscious. This is the vital interest of the role that deliberative reason must play in the sphere of religion. Hence there is a close and intimate relation between philosophy and religion. This is the reason why it is impossible for us to understand the nature of religion in all its ramifications, and the power and influence it exercises as the greatest civilizing force in human civilization, unless reason is employed to make it part and parcel of our entire intellectual, moral and spiritual life. In the first chapter, while laying stress on this intimate relation between religion and philosophy, I have pointed out that in India both religion and philosophy have been taken to be equally important elements in

man's spiritual life. The common criticism, on the one hand, that Indian philosophy is no better than mythology or theology and, on the other, that there is no such thing as religion in the Western sense of the term in Hindu culture, confirms that the secret of the survival of Indian religions is the close connection between these two interests of human life.

The object of the second chapter is to discuss the nature of religion. The term 'religion' is one of those few with which the more we are familiar, the more do we have confused notions about it. This is inevitable because of the very complexity of the idea of religion. As religion passes through many stages of its evolution and man's knowledge of God develops concurrently with growth in the consciousness of himself and of the world step by step, it may be interpreted differently by different people and in different epochs of civilization. Religion further is also subject to the law of development in which what comes first in nature comes last in thought. That nobody is an atheist, that no one can proudly claim that he has no knowledge of God and that unconsciously at least everybody believes in some power or principle which accounts for the regularity, order and system present in the universe, are facts we have to reckon with in our attempt to understand the true nature of religion. This means that we must guard ourselves against the errors of reducing religion to belief in the forces of Nature or in mere morality or mere human values and so forth. Belief in the existence of God and the practical and emotional attitude towards Him dictated by such a belief, are crucial to the notion of religion. The attempt to define and understand religion without belief in the existence of God is doomed to failure. This is on account of a gross error to which theologians have frequently succumbed. We have no right to reduce religion to anything which is merely an element in it. William James has pointed out that just because religion is a very complex phenomenon of human life and comprehends all the different elements of the human personality, it is liable to be understood

in terms of only one or more elements and not of all the elements involved in it.

The question whether Buddh'ism is religion has been hotly debated. Whether Buddha believed in the existence of God and in the reality of the personal independence and freedom of the individual self are matters of debate. But that Buddha believed in the existence of an impersonal, rational, sovereign law of *Dhamma* at the root of the universe is beyond all dispute. Belief in the existence of God is only a short step from belief in *Dhamma*. Purpose, order, system are concepts that cannot be understood without their relation to some mind. Buddha's unflinching faith in the conservation of moral values betokens his belief in God. Even though people believe in the existence of such a universal impersonal mind at the root of the universe, it is supposed, nevertheless, to determine both the course of Nature and the destiny of man.

Buddhism is acknowledged to be a religion, but certainly it can be a religion only in the sense that without belief in the existence of God one is not able to understand Buddha's insistence on the sovereignty of the moral law. Even if Buddhism is religion in the sense that the sovereign moral law or principle is its foundation, it cannot be gainsaid that this law or principle as blind, unconscious reason can be called in question. Further, since the law itself presupposes a law-giver, the development of the teachings of Buddha himself into Mahāyāna Buddhism must be taken into account. The more Buddha asked his disciples not to adore and worship him as a superhuman being, the greater was their zeal to worship and adore him as God. The subsequent history of Buddhism bears eloquent testimony to the fact that Buddha himself became God and was raised to the same rank of the Supreme Mind and the Controller of the Universe as Śrī Rāma or Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This remarkable change in the thinking of the followers of Buddhism must be taken into account in our effort to determine its true nature and to support the view that religion cannot be dissociated

from belief in God. Hence, if we mean by religion anything which is not obscure and vague and which is not taken by us to mean anything else, we must take belief in the existence of God to be fundamental to understanding its nature. In other words, if religion has a definite connotation and meaning, it cannot be identified with or subordinated to many modern substitutes for it, namely, humanism, naturalism and so forth.

Morality can by no means be supposed to be its sole content. If religion is nothing more, what name can we give to morality? It is certainly by a very large courtesy that we can give the name of religion to mere morality or humanism and so forth. Hence we have to concede that religion cannot be dissociated from belief in the existence of God. In arguing out the case of religion just in this sense in the second chapter, I have pointed out how man is prone to mistake a part in a whole for the whole itself. That is a weakness of the human mind which accounts for giving the status of religion to so many purely secular interests. As there is no aspect of human life, not a single department of human thought which religion does not comprehend, one element or one interest of human life may be regarded as religion. Secularists may form a religion of secularism itself, as religion has bearings on the secular interests of human life. One is at one's liberty to treat even nationalism or patriotism as religion. But these catchwords of the modern age can be designated religion only by failure to distinguish between what is genuine and what is a simulacrum.

Religion has something numinous in it, something superhuman, supernatural, something of transcendent worth and value which infinitely surpasses all our thoughts that belong to the finite order. There is an ineradicable urge in man to transcend his finitude, and it is just because he is not merely finite, that is to say, because he is both finite and infinite, that he does not find ultimate satisfaction in the facts of the finite order. This is in itself the hallmark of the spiritual nature and destiny of man, which implies that man is basically a religious

being. Whitehead has rightly said : "Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within the passing flux of immediate things ; something which is real and yet waiting to be realised ; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts ; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension ; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach ; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest " Pointing out that the religious vision evokes worship, he draws attention to the religious experience being mixed up with crude, barbaric fancies. Gradually and steadily the vision assumes a nobler form and gets clearer expression. "It is the one element in human experience which persistently shows an upward trend. It fades and then recurs. But when it renews its force, it recurs with an added richness and purity of content. The fact of the religious vision, and its history of persistent expansion, is our one ground for optimism. Apart from it, human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience."399

Religion arises from this basic need in human nature which not merely satisfies curiosity about the ultimate cause of the universe and the goal of his destiny, but also introduces harmony, balance and peace into his personality, co-ordinates the different sides of his inward being and fixes them all on one central purpose of life which is the basis of the peace and happiness that man always seeks. Religious experience has been one element in the totality of human experience even from the very beginnings. Being a self-conscious being, man cannot but raise questions as to the ultimate explanation of the universe in which he is placed and the meaning and goal of his existence. As a part of Nature, man always depends on it ; he must raise

questions as to the principle which can be its ultimate explanation. He must also fix his mind on some one single principle which can integrate the conflicting emotions and passions of his inner life. The need of inward peace, happiness and integration has been emphasised by modern researches in psycho-analysis. It is now a settled fact that man cannot be fully satisfied with his outward achievements, the values and goals of his outward life, the pleasures that satisfy his senses and mind. That which satisfies both his theoretical and practical needs cannot be anything within the universe or within himself. Immanent causality cannot meet his theoretical needs. What we call the Transcendent Principle in human experience cannot be dispensed with. Religion points to something which must be both outside and inside man. Ontologically, the principle in which the ultimate explanation of the universe can be found and in which the meaning and goal of human existence can be realised must be other than and distinct from man himself. If man were himself ultimate and if all questions were answered by man himself, there would be no point in seeking something else which explained to him the secret of the universe and also fulfilled the needs of his inward being.

In any attempt to clarify the nature and meaning of religion, one must, therefore, guard oneself against the error of reducing religion to some immanent principle or category. This warning is necessary, because in some of the modern substitutes of religion emphasis is being continually laid on some immanent principle being the basis of the religious consciousness. Carl Jung, the founder of the analytical school of psychology, has put forward a view of religion which, though to a very great extent helpful in understanding it, has stressed that the source and centre of man's peace, harmony, integration and happiness is to be found within himself. The difference between Freud and Jung is crucial; if the element of transcendence is indispensable for religion, it must be admitted that the doctrine advanced by the latter is more repugnant to the religious consciousness than that put forward by the former.

Freud has atleast the understanding that religion is rooted in the consciousness of God. But Jung points out that religion which contributes to the fulfilment of the inward being of man is to be found in man himself. Such a view certainly reduces religion to morality, because any process of bringing about the fulfilment of man by manifesting only the potentiality of man's inward being can be regarded merely as ethical culture. Morality is essentially a process of manifesting the creative possibilities of man in accordance with the norms of human conduct. It has nothing to do with anything outside man himself. As it forms part of the religious consciousness and is an element in man's awareness of God, it is easily identified with religion, being conveniently mistaken for the whole. But morality is not religion. The relation of morality to religion raises the question whether the religious consciousness is awareness transcending man or whether it is nothing but a medium of manifesting his creative possibilities. Martin Buber represents the modern view thus: "According to Jung, this modern consciousness now turns itself with its 'most intimate and intense expectations' to the soul. This cannot mean anything other than that it will have nothing more to do with the God believed in by religions who is, to be sure, present to the soul, who reveals Himself to it, communicates with it, but remains transcendent to it in His being. Modern consciousness turns instead towards the soul as the only sphere which man can expect to harbour the divine."⁴⁰⁰ He adds that while the new psychology claims to be 'no world view but a science', it seeks to be more than an interpreter of religion. "It proclaims the new religion, the only one which can still be true, the religion of pure psychic immanence."⁴⁰¹

Hence all such conceptions of religion and of the religious consciousness as maintain that man himself supplies the answer

400. Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God*, pp. 83-84.

401. *Ibid.*

to all his queries, are one-sided and therefore wrong. God is the ultimate explanation of the universe and also that in which the ultimate meaning and goal of human existence can be found. If there is no God who can be the ultimate explanation of the universe and also the goal or meaning of human existence, then, certainly the universe and human life must be taken to be absurd. This is the point that has been emphatically made by modern existentialists, because in their novels and plays they point out that if there is no God then the universe is purposeless and no limit can be set to human freedom.

Much of the meaning that belongs to human life and to the universe is therefore due to the fact that God is at the root of it and is its ultimate explanation. Human life also is not a mechanical procession of atoms, because man is more than mere Nature. If man has come out of Nature, he has been there already from the very beginning. Rather than saying that man is the product of Nature, we could state the same fact by saying that the mind of man has been directing and determining the course of Nature in such a manner that man could be its final product. It is only by holding that God is the cause of the universe and that He is immanent in the process of Nature and in man that we can satisfactorily explain the finitude of man on the one hand and the purposive character of the universe on the other.

Existentialists have made the point that the meaning of human life cannot be found within human life itself. Man in his own right cannot be his own explanation. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* rightly emphasises this basic finitude of man when it tells us that man in his own right is indeed incomplete, which is a clear indication of the possibility of his finding meaning in something outside himself.

The difference of God and man is fundamental to religion. Man is not himself a creator of the values that he seeks. God is the name man gives to that principle or power which governs the

processions of events in the universe outside and is also the destiny of man. Had there been no controlling intelligence and will at the root of the universe and had man not been a value-seeking animal, there would neither have been any desire on his part to understand the nature of the universe in which he lives, nor would he seek some principle outside him. Man must ask questions pertaining to the ultimate meaning of his existence. Religion is confrontation with God and cannot therefore be regarded as no more than mere manifestation of the creative possibilities embedded in the sub-conscious region of the mind. There is in religion, as in every form of knowledge, an object and a subject, and the religious consciousness is the designation of this intimate relation between the subject and the object. Man claims an awareness, howsoever vague it may be, of something other than him. Although he cannot claim his existence independently of this something or God, because his very being absolutely depends upon God in such a way that his being deprived of his dependence on God amounts to nothing short of the very extinction of his existence. As the testimony of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* eloquently proclaims :

Non-existent (*a-sat*) himself does one become,
 If he knows that Brahma is non-existent.
 If one knows that Brahma exists,
 Such a one people thereby know as existent.
 This, indeed, is its bodily self, as of the former. 402

Religious knowledge, again, cannot be likened to ordinary forms of knowledge. There has been so much confusion in contemporary philosophy engendered by the unwarranted use of the categories of one branch of human knowledge in another, that this warning is necessary specially in the sphere of religion. This is a subject on which religious thinkers and seers have

themselves left no room for any misgiving, confusion or doubt in the immortal records of their experiences bequeathed to us. No one can expect to know God in the manner one investigates, for instance, in a laboratory the property of a salt, or analyses the constituents of which it is made. God who is the ultimate explanation of the universe and the ultimate goal of man, certainly is not the name of the mind that is purposeless. All religions think of God as the Supreme Mind and as sharing many of the attributes that man possesses, though in the highest imaginable degree and without any touch of imperfection in them. There is no other way of thinking of God.

Personality is the highest category known to us and, in affirming God to be the cause of the universe, man has no alternative to thinking of Him as being a person. The *Upaniṣads* to which the doctrine of Impersonal Absolute is customarily attributed, have emphatically acknowledged the personality of God. There would certainly be no point in addressing meditation, surrender, worship and prayer to God, if He were merely another name we assign to blind chance or if He were conceived to be spiritual in character though having no traits which are characteristic of personality. But in man there is a religious instinct which is the instinct to adore and worship, to bow down before somebody and to pray to someone. He can bring into full play these instincts only in the course of his confrontation with such a being as calls forth these feelings from the inmost depths.

The relation, therefore, between man and God is a personal one. It cannot be just impersonal knowledge. The impersonal form of knowledge is illustrated, for example, in the solution of a mathematical problem or in the discovery of some property in a chemical compound in a laboratory. There is in such forms of knowledge neither any desire nor any need for penetrating into the very heart of the object. The chemist who is anxious to know the chemical constitution of common salt, for example, has no need to press his enquiry beyond his

finding that it is composed of sodium and chlorine. But knowledge of God is not of this kind. It is the direct confrontation of one person with another. It may be admitted that the personal relationship holding good, for example, between husband and wife or father and son may be taken to be the illustration of the kind of knowledge that we have of God. We cannot seek to know God in the manner in which we know the ordinary objects of the world or in the way the scientist analyses the properties of matter in his laboratory. The human mind is so constituted that purely theoretical knowledge, which means the conscious exercise merely of cognitive power is ruled out of court. Man's knowledge of a person and, for the matter of that, of God, involves his whole being, his whole personality. He knows God through all his mind, all his heart and all his will. His emotions and actions are no less important elements in his knowledge of God than are his senses and his mind. It is impossible indeed to think of any form of knowledge which is absolutely impersonal.

I have dealt with this problem at some length in the second chapter and it is not necessary to make the point once again that religious knowledge is deeply emotional and practical, though by no means lacking in intellectual or theoretical elements. It is not mere curiosity that generates the religious sensitivity. It is the constant urge in man to establish a positive relationship with God, not only for the fulfilment of his secular needs, but also for meeting the needs of his moral and spiritual life. Mere theoretical knowledge of God is hardly any better than scientific knowledge. To know that we cannot understand Nature without God as the controlling intelligence and will at the root of it, is not enough. It is no more than natural theology, which takes us into the realm of mere possibilities. It can demonstrate to us the possibility of the existence of God. But religion has claimed, down the ages, direct, immediate intuition of God. Man not only knows God, but has also feelings of awe and reverence for Him who alone is the appropriate object of worship, prayer, meditation and surrender, and of the rituals and

sacrifices through which these feelings are expressed. Therefore, mere knowledge of God is philosophy; it cannot be religion.

Rāmanuja is not particular in giving, after the fashion of the modern theologians or philosophers of religion, a logically air-tight definition of religion. There is no difficulty, all the same, in extracting it from his many luminous statements in his writings, whenever he has to deal with the monistic view of the identity of the individual with the Absolute. Perhaps there is no term suggestive of the connotation and meaning of 'religion', as we have defined it, and more appropriate to the spirit underlying it than '*bhakti*'. Any elaborate treatment of the term '*bhakti*' is not called for at the present moment, because its meaning and content have already been dealt with. It is sufficient to recall that it involves belief in the reality and existence of a personal God with whom personal relations can be established.

The attitude manifested in the relationship that holds good between man and God is that of worship, adoration, devotion and surrender. There are other concrete expressions of *bhakti*, all of which follow from the recognition of the cardinal fact that man is not his own explanation and that the ultimate meaning of his life is to be found in God. Man has not been left alone by God, because the sole purpose of man's existence is to serve God. It is this definition of religion that fits in well with the Western view of it. There is no reason, therefore, for holding the view that the Western and the Indian conceptions of religion are poles apart. The usual division of the East and the West on this ground is based on the Western mind taking notice of only a fringe of Hinduism without having a comprehensive view of Hinduism as a whole.

In Indian thought and culture there is nothing equivalent to the Western term 'religion'. The word, '*dharma*', frequently in use, is more comprehensive than 'religion.' '*Dharma*' as duty and worship of God may be treated as a duty along with other duties. Yet it cannot be quite appropriate to maintain that

because there is emphasis on *dharma*, there is no such thing as religion in the Western sense of the term in Hinduism, and that Hinduism is more a way of life than a religion. No generalization about the character of Hinduism as a whole, on the basis of what can be said about a few schools of thought which *prima facie* do not bring in God in their theoretical framework, can be valid. It must be added here that such schools of thought were merely *darśanas*, or points of view. They do not so much aggressively repudiate the existence of God as maintain that God is not necessary in their theoretical framework. Moreover, many such atheistic systems have counterparts in which belief in God has been realised as indispensable in understanding the nature of the universe. The atheistic *Sāṅkhya* is supplemented by theistic *Yoga*. The *Pūrva Mimāṃsā* of Jaimini is supplemented by the *Uttara Mimāṃsā* of Bādarāyana. Hence, it is not true to say that belief in the existence of God is not a characteristic feature of Hinduism.

Concentrating on the subjective side of religion, an attempt has been made to substantiate the point that it is in *bhakti* that all the elements of cognition, feeling and action have been cemented. There is no form of religion in which these three elements cannot be found in some measure at least. The question, therefore, is not whether in religion the element of cognition or of emotion or of action is utterly absent, but whether any of them is recognised to be the primary element, other elements being regarded as secondary. But while these three elements can be distinguished, they cannot be separated from one another. From the point of view of the psychology of religion, it may be said that emphasis on this or that side of the religious consciousness by utterly neglecting the remaining elements results in denaturing religion and distorting our conception of it.

Our attempt to bring the East and the West closer to each other has not been prompted by any desire to establish the superiority of the East over the West or of the West over the

East. The effort has been directed merely to the possibilities of mutual understanding. I hope that the account of religion in the second chapter will mitigate a good deal of misunderstanding about the genius of the Indian mind.

The first reality by which man is surrounded and in which he finds his place is the universe. Man starts with the independence of the universe which he tries to control in his struggle with his environment. The world in which man finds himself is a world of necessity in which objects exist in space and time and react upon one other according to universal laws which are independent of the will of man. In one aspect of his being, man is a part of this spatio-temporal world. The laws of the universe are conducive to his own practical needs. It is in virtue of this that he finds the immediate satisfaction of all his needs and impulses. There can be no *prima facie* case for the experience in it or outside it of any principle in which the world along with its fixed laws can find its ultimate explanation. The object of the thinking of seventeenth and eighteenth century Western philosophy was to prove this hostility between man and the universe. The dualism of primary and secondary qualities created a gap between man and Nature which was so unbridgeable that man was prevented from real, objective knowledge of Nature. Subsequent thought led to the result that it is not by establishing the relationship of sympathy or communion with Nature but rather by brutal treatment meted out to Nature that it is possible for man to turn it to good account in his favour. Man was engaged in the task of conquering Nature rather than entering into communion with it. This was the philosophy behind the Industrial Revolution. From that time onward, the foundations of a purely mechanical civilization were laid in Western culture. The contagion spread all over the world and has totally swept away the age-long tradition of Indian thought and culture, the characteristic feature of which has been education through communion with Nature. Indian traditional thought has never kept man and

Nature apart, because the best thoughts of the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* were born of contemplation and meditation on the mysteries of human existence practised in forest retreats.

The attitude of hostility between man and Nature which modern culture presents to us is the root cause of the decay of all standards in human life. Be that as it may, closer reflection on the mutual relations between man and the universe reveals that man's existence is not understandable in its abstraction from Nature. Neither can man claim his independence of Nature nor Nature her independence of the individual. This idea has been so frequently repeated and sought to be systematically and logically defended in Indian philosophical literature that a reference to this point at this stage seems to be utterly redundant. Indian thinkers were so strongly convinced of this truth that, unlike other thinkers all over the world, they declared even at the time when no trace of civilization could be found anywhere else on the globe that man is a microcosm in the macrocosm. The same structure that is found in the human individual on a smaller scale is found in a larger scale in the universe. Man is that form of being in which all grades of reality intersect. The conclusion, then, that man's relations with the universe are closer and more intimate than they seem to be to unreflective thought is but a short step from this view of man. Closer reflection on the nature of the universe and on the way in which it is known to us makes it a matter altogether beyond dispute that there is some sort of intimate kinship between man and Nature. The burden of the whole trend of idealistic thinking in the West has been just this teaching of an intimate bond of kinship. That man and Nature are different from each other and that they are inseparable also from each other all the same must be taken to be the teaching of Hegel. The deeper truth of such a close relation cannot be set aside. Whatever the disabilities of Hegelian idealism, at least this one lesson of both man and Nature being understandable in terms of each other, certainly secures for it a permanent place in the history of ideas all over the world.

In Viśiṣṭādvaita, man and the world, the subject and the object, have been acknowledged to be inseparable from each other, in spite of their uncompromising differences. It emerges from all this that deeper reflection on the conditions of our knowledge of the world forces upon us the view that, in the absence of the unity of the self and the world which is a system of objects governed by laws, the world cannot be an object of our knowledge. Kant laid emphasis on the unity of the self as the indispensable condition of the knowledge of the world. The key to the understanding of the world lies in the nature of the self. Hence, although both the world and the mind are different from each other, they are doubtless inseparable. Without doing violence to the nature of both, we cannot set up any kind of dualism between them. In answer to the question, respecting their status and reality, it may be said that they are ultimate in their own right and that any attempt to reduce either of them to the other is doomed to failure.

The recognition of the inseparable reality of nature, man and God brings us into the precincts of a philosophical point of view which can be designated as 'Viśiṣṭādvaita'. From the experience of the apparent independence of the universe and of the object in it, we pass on to the human mind as the condition of the knowledge of it. The consideration of the nature of the finite self leads us to God. It is God who holds both Nature and the mind, the subject and the object, matter and spirit together. Our experience itself is such that these three principles come to be recognised as its indispensable conditions. Philosophy cannot set aside the claims of human experience, as it starts with experience of which its primary business is to give an explanation. It has to single out and unfold the principles underlying experience and make intelligible to us its fundamental structure. Such a task is not only theoretically necessary, but is important and significant also from the practical point of view. Arguments have been urged in favour of the reality of matter alone or of both matter and mind with God as

their inner controller, or of God alone. These are the types of beliefs and doctrines we have to reckon with, and they entail inevitable consequences which influence our thought and conduct. The test of a good philosophy is its capacity for taking account of all the possible implications and aspects of a problem. It is experience as a whole which has to be considered from all points of view. The ontological structure of Viśiṣṭādvaita bears eloquent testimony to the need for the recognition of the principles of matter, mind and God. After the consideration of alternative points of view the conclusion has been reached that if the nature and structure of the universe is such that it bears witness to the reality of God, then it would be puerile for us to doubt the existence of God on the flimsy ground that He is not an object of sensuous perception. We have argued that the world which we know is not the world in which matter is the only reality. Side by side with matter, other forms of being like life, mind and consciousness also are to be found in it. Hence physics or chemistry cannot be the only science. As a matter of fact, instead of saying that there is one science, we should say that there are so many sciences each concentrating upon a specialized section of the universe. The sciences into which the study and interpretation of the world are divided are themselves so utterly different on one another that a method or principle suited to one of them cannot apply to the rest. If there is so much difference even among the sciences, then it is sheer dogmatism to hold that science can give its ultimate verdict, *pro* or *con*, with regard to our belief in the existence of God. This is not a problem of science which concentrates upon cross-sections of reality, whereas the existence of God concerns the universe as a whole. Hence, before we attempt to discuss the problem of the existence of God, we should carefully bear in mind what the question is. Almost all the difficulties in science and philosophy have arisen from the failure to exercise the utmost caution in this regard.

If God is the sovereign principle and if He has left unmistakable marks of His existence not only on Nature but on the human mind also, the business of philosophy is to make them intelligible to us. Philosophy, therefore, has to be comprehensive in its scope. It cannot set aside the claims of the multiple dimensions of human experience and of the human personality. Neither Nature nor history has been left by God without the marks of His existence in them. All attempts to understand Nature and history in their own right must be doomed to failure. It is the teaching of Viśiṣṭādvaita that Nature and history find their ultimate explanation and meaning in God. Further, just because God has left neither Nature nor history without His witness, it should be the business of philosophy to explain and unfold the meaning of the presence of God in Nature and history. On the one hand, Viśiṣṭādvaita, unlike other theories of reality, neither rejects the reality of the individual self and the world as monism does, nor on the other like materialism does it ever maintain that the individual self and God are not real. Self-sufficient humanism and materialism do not go far enough to take account of all that is contained in experience.

To fulfil its task philosophy has to seek the support of the convergence of as many lines of thinking as possible. This means that we must approach the problem of the existence of God and many other issues concerning religious experience from the standpoint of science and metaphysics on the one hand and of moral and religious experience on the other. If God is the reality whose existence is beyond dispute, then the nature and structure of the world must not contradict the evidence that is adduced in support of His existence. It is exactly this procedure of making a regress upon God from the facts and events of the world that is the characteristic feature of natural theology. Metaphysics adopts the same method of interpreting the world with a view to tracing it back to an ultimate principle which can be acknowledged to be its explanation. Nietzsche once said

that metaphysics is a science of mere possibility and I think he is right because metaphysics can get us no farther than simply hinting at the bare possibilities and at the reality of the principles by which the given world can be explained. We must not demand of metaphysics to make the knowledge of God attainable to us in the manner we know the ordinary objects of the world. It is enough if metaphysics furnishes convincing reasons, albeit indirect, for the belief in the reality of God. Metaphysics and natural theology address themselves to fundamentally the same problems. If all facts in our experience are taken into account, then both press upon us the existence of God at least as a bare possibility. It is no use expecting metaphysics and theology to help us to any direct or immediate intuition of God. Metaphysics and natural theology are not strong enough in their own right to lend support to our belief in God.

Complementary to the metaphysical thinking, there is another clinching line of approach to this problem. It is forced upon us by our experience of value. There are, on the one hand, facts with which science and metaphysics deal and, on the other hand, there are values and ideals which also are included in human experience. The question is whether the experience of value supports belief in the existence of God and further what must be the nature of God whose conception we come to form on the basis of our experience of values and ideals of life. Values play the most vital role in moral and religious experience. Human intelligence must not be conceived as functioning in merely reproducing the images of the outward reality. Cognition is the function of the soul with all its energies, which suggests that we cannot claim knowledge of anything without at the same time thinking of its intimate connection with our emotional and practical interests which it may promote or retard. Hence, while the interpretation of facts suggests the bare possibility of the existence of God,

values and ideals of life conclusively establish the truth of the same conclusion on the testimony of the inward experience of man. There is no radical opposition between these two methods of our knowledge of God, because both lead us to the inevitable conclusion that the world and human experience cannot be understood without the existence of God.

The student of religion is interested not only in the bare possibility of the existence of God but also in the unimpeachable evidence that can support truths concerning His nature. Metaphysics and natural theology are formal enquiries, but moral and religious experiences tell us that the question of the meaning and the nature of God is more important than the question pertaining to His existence. No one can, in fact, be expected to be interested in God conceived to be a bare unknown x . From values we pass on to the owner of values. In a mindless universe or in a world which is without any purpose and meaning, there can be no place for values. But if values are real and we cannot understand their nature without reference to that which possesses them, there can be no getting away from the conclusion that we cannot talk about God unless He is personal. It is exactly at this point that the problem of the personality of God crops up. Theism maintains the doctrine of the personality of God and, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita, God is the Supreme Personal Spirit who is the home of all values. Hence for Viśiṣṭādvaita the question of the nature of God is more important than that concerning His existence. Hence I have laid stress on the point more than once that personality is the very foundation of religion. There can be no reality in the strict sense of the term if worship and adoration cannot be addressed to God and, certainly, the impersonal Absolute is not the God that religion demands. Many distinguished philosophers object to the idea of ascribing personality to God, but I think they are misled by their prejudice against the concept and are not very clear as to the meaning of

their assumptions. They are haunted by the fear of bringing God down to the level of man; but, in point of fact, their thinking leaves room neither for God nor for man. We cannot dispense with the idea of personality in religious experience, whether in the context of God or in that of man.

Perhaps there could be no better defence of the idea of the personality of God than in the following passage quoted by Baron Friedrich Von Hugel: "As to the Personal God, it has now become a prevalent fashion angrily to proclaim, or complacently to assume, the utter absurdity of anything Personal about the Infinite; since Personality, of every degree and kind, essentially implies, indeed largely consists of, limitations of various kinds, and is a gross anthropomorphism the moment we apply it to anything but man himself. Yet it is interesting to note the readiness with which these same thinkers will hypostatise parts, or special functions, of our human personality, and will indeed do so largely with concepts which we know to be specially characteristic of spatially extended bodies. Thus Thought or Love or Law, or even Substance, nothing of all this is, for such thinkers, anthropomorphic or sub-human; but anything personal is rank anthropomorphism. Yet it is only self-conscious spirit that we know well, since it alone do we know form within. Self-conscious spirit is immensely rich in content; and self-conscious spirit is by far the widest and yet deepest reality known to us at all. True Natural Science and even Philosophy do not, of themselves, fully find the Personal God, since Natural Science is not, as such, busy with the ultimate questions, and since Philosophy appears, of itself, to bring us indeed to certain more than human orders or laws, but hardly fully to the Orderer. But there is nothing intrinsically unreasonable in thinking of the Ultimate Cause, Ground and End of the world as certainly not less than, as somehow not all unlike, what we know our own self-conscious mind, feeling and will to be, provided we keep the sense that

God is certainly not just one Object amongst other objects, or even simply one Subject amongst other subjects; and that though variously present and operative in all subjects and objects, He is not only more perfect than, but distinct and different from them all. In so thinking we attribute to the Supreme Reality what we ourselves possess that is richest in content.....within our experience; and life and history abound with warnings how easy it is here to go apparently further and to fare very much worse.

Indeed, we can safely hold with Lotze not only that Personality is compatible with Infinitude but that the personality of all finite beings can be shown to be imperfect precisely because of their finitude, and hence that 'Perfect Personality is compatible only with the conception of an Infinite Being; finite beings can only achieve an approximation to it'."408

The importance, significance and value of the idea of personality is so fundamental to religion that, in spite of its becoming a well-worn theme in religious literature, it needs repeated emphasis. It has to be constantly borne in mind that religion is the only occupation of the human mind in which personality commands supreme importance. Religion has been defined and understood in various ways and sometimes equated to what cannot be called so. A good deal of analysis of this theme is called for because the modern discipline of linguistic analysis lays stress on clarification of ideas. In spite of religion having been regarded through the ages as fundamentally a relationship between man and God, it has been pulled down to human dimensions. Many of the modern linguistic empiricists, who are carried away by the attractions of the scientific and technological civilization, have no scruples

408. *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion, First Series*, pp. 49-50, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1931.

In trying to understand the subject-matter of one province of thought in terms of the ruling concept of another field of human knowledge : they reduce religion to morality. I think they are not true to their calling. The very moment that we utter the word ' religion ', we take it to point to some definite context and meaning, and it is a gross error to interpret it otherwise than what can be said to constitute its connotation. Religion certainly is not mere morality, and it is only by a very large courtesy that we designate certain systems of ethical conduct by the name of religion. Personality is the very core and essence of the religious view of the world. Mere assertion of some intelligent principle at the root of the universe is not enough. This intelligent principle has also to be that in which the ultimate meaning and destiny of man is to be found. The question of the principle in which the explanation of the world is to be found is also the question concerning that in which man can find his ultimate meaning and get satisfaction of all aspects of his being in such a way that he comes ultimately to the realization that there is nothing else which remains still to be attained or realised. In other words, that which is ultimate puts an end not only to all our theoretical queries regarding the nature and constitution of the universe, but also integrates and harmonises all the aspects of our being and brings about the realisation of all the values in such a way and to such an extent that nothing further remains to be enquired after or yearned for. If the Supreme Mind at the root of the universe is such that these needs of the human spirit cannot be met, then It is inadequate. The feelings and acts of worship and adoration, and humility, reverence, awe and surrender are involved in that attitude of man which is religious. Hence, there can be no religion in the true sense of the term if that Supreme Mind is not personal.

It is worth while to bear in mind, however, that the term ' personal ' in such a context as this is never used in the limited,

narrow sense in which it applies to the finite individual. Hence an attempt has been made by me, while discussing the ontological foundations of Viśiṣṭādvaita, not only to establish that there is no alternative to the recognition of the reality of the three principles, but also to urge that all the difficulties that arise in other spheres of human thought and practice can be overcome only if personality is assigned to both God and man. The central convictions of religion embrace all the departments of human thought and all the phases of his being, and it is for this reason that the credibility of a particular point of view adopted in religion becomes all the more reinforced if it is supported by all possible lines of thinking. In considering the problem of personality, I have therefore kept in my mind the necessity of the convergent lines of thinking. It has been shown that from whatever point of view we seek to handle this problem, there can be no escape from the sovereign concept of personality.

All such concepts and doctrines as are distinctive of the philosophy and religion of Śrī Rāmānujācārya, have been taken into account mainly from the point of view of natural theology. I do not think there is any unresolved conflict between natural theology and revelation. If reason is God's endowment in man and if it is also true that God reveals Himself to man, there can be no conflict between natural theology and revealed theology. I have concentrated in the first four chapters on the problems of the theology of Viśiṣṭādvaita mainly from the standpoint of natural theology. The meaning and content of religion being what they are supposed to be, no departure from the truths vindicated there can be reasonable.

The second half of the book seeks to consolidate the same point of view on the basis of the interpretation of the texts of scriptures. The necessity for a fresh look at the scriptures is paramount, because there would be hardly any scope for

enlisting any support of the traditional Vedāntic literature for the doctrines of Viśiṣṭādvaita, if they were not set forth in plain, unambiguous language in the texts. It is open to the free mind of the reader to judge if it is the monistic or the theistic interpretation of the universe that has been taught in the canonical scriptures of Hinduism, namely, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahmasūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Hinduism lays stress on experience rather than on reason and authority as the touchstone of religion. It does not, however, altogether discard authority and reason. Direct experience or intuition of the Ultimate Reality cannot be had in one bound. Even a long course of spiritual discipline ends in immediate knowledge only. One's personal experience alone can be the convincing proof of the truth one proceeds to examine, but until this stage of verification in one's personal experience is reached, one has to depend upon the experience of others. A hard and fast dividing line cannot be drawn between these three sources of spiritual experience and realization.

Authority embodies the experience of the race or the nation which reason is called upon to substantiate. Reason mediates between authority or the wisdom of the race and the personal experience of the individual. In *Śruti*, one encounters the accumulated wisdom of the race. There is no radical opposition between the truths recorded in the *Vedas* and one's personal experience, because the former are the witnesses to the eternal spiritual truths attained by individual seekers of truth which serve to enkindle in others a fresh impetus to carry on experiments on the basis of the principles enshrined in them for the attainment of truths claimed to have been realised by the seers or *ṛṣis* in the sphere of spiritual experience. Reason is employed for the purpose of the enforcement of the conclusions corroborated by the accumulated wisdom of tradition or authority. It is, therefore, from authority or scripture that one has to

make a beginning in the initial stages of one's spiritual pilgrimage. Hinduism lays supreme emphasis on *sampradāya* or tradition. Just because scripture is the record of the personal experiences of the seers, all *Vedāntic* teachers express their fidelity to it. They commend scripture as the supreme authority till one comes to verify the truths in one's personal experience. Hence, until one attains in personal experience the truths that were previously only mediately known to him, one can dispense with scripture or the authority of tradition only at one's great peril. Sāṅkara's loyalty to scripture is well known. His fidelity to tradition is no less emphatic. He does not shrink from boldly declaring that a person well-versed in all the disciplines but unfamiliar with tradition no more deserves respect than a fool is worthy of honour and veneration.⁴⁰⁹

Therefore, all the teachers of the different schools of *Vedānta* claim the authority of an age-long tradition in support of the philosophical doctrines they have propounded as being the essence of the *Vedas*. The *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* command the highest authority in matters pertaining to spiritual experience. All the exponents of the different schools of *Vedānta* were obliged to turn to the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* for the support of their doctrines.

I have devoted a long chapter to the treatment of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* in which there has been a radical departure from the conventional interpretation of their teachings. They are conventionally supposed to teach the doctrines of *Brahman* or Ultimate Reality as a principle of abstract identity and impersonal existence, the falsity of the world and the identity of the individual self with God. That the *Upaniṣads* leave no room for the personal independence and

freedom of the individual and the reality of the world has become so commonplace a view and has been so widely publicised for a long time that it has come to be endowed with an aura of infallible authority around it. Any one who differs is branded as heterodox and utterly incapable of laying hold of the true spirit of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*. Professor Max Muller, for example, is persuaded to believe that the *Upaniṣads* seem inclined to the *vivarta* view of causality,⁴¹⁰ when, as a matter of fact, the illustrations and images that have been advanced in them in order to explain the doctrine of causality are patently in favour of real change of an evolutionary kind (*pariṇāma*).

It is not unusual for the interpretations of the scriptures in keeping with the dominant climate of opinion at a certain period to continue to enjoy approval until new demands, occasioned by changes in social conditions, are made for a fresh look at them. Scripture can certainly be so interpreted as to meet the changing demands arising from changing social conditions. It cannot be gainsaid, however, that scripture may have some definite, eternal, permanent meaning which cannot be altered, distorted or disguised by adjustments to the changing conditions in social life. The acceptance of a particular point of view as the unquestioned truth for a long period is no ground for its recognition as the absolute truth, and there is always the need of subjecting it to critical judgment.

I have taken the view that the import of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* has been rather unreasonably assimilated to monistic and pantheistic doctrines, when there is irrevocable warrant in them for an utterly opposite point of view. Perhaps this has escaped the critical insight of many students of the *Upaniṣads*. I have made out a strong case for the doctrine of

410. See his *Three Lectures on 'Vedānta'*,

personality as the basis for the theistic interpretation of reality. A metaphysic which is not theology is, in my judgment, an abortion. We cannot discuss any question of the nature of the Ultimate Reality without also attributing personality to It. The Absolute cannot enter into our consciousness without being the source of all values enshrined in our experience. Although it is sometimes maintained that theism was already in the process of development even in the early *Upaniṣads*, and, as I have explained in my treatment of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, that their teachings are not necessarily incompatible with theism, they, nevertheless, are supposed to be utterly at variance with those doctrines which are fundamental to the religious interpretation of reality.

It is customary to hold that the early *Upaniṣads* are mainly monistic and atheistic, while the later ones are theistic. Such *Upaniṣads* as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, the *Chāndogya*, and the *Taittiriya* are claimed to be monistic rather than theistic. Professor Hiriyanna, for example, maintains that the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* is clearly monistic in its orientation. Even the text of the *Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa* of this *Upaniṣad*, he says, teaches monism rather than theism. "The section in question," he says "may, after all, signify nothing more than the transcendent and immanent character of ultimate reality."⁴¹¹ But are not transcendence and immanence complementary aspects of the Deity, and do they not endorse theism rather than monism? Both are principles of Its difference from everything else. This is nothing but pure, undiluted theism.

It is certainly surprising to note that the *Upaniṣads* have largely been interpreted in accordance with the techniques of monism. The impersonal view of existence is the characteristic mark of monism. In strict monism, there is no room for

411. *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, p. 179,

difference or duality, and if monism is the doctrine of the reality of *Brahman* alone, excluding the reality of everything else, then the *Advaita* of Śaṅkara may be a paradigmatic instance of such a view. Whether the *Upaniṣads* advocate this doctrine of Ultimate Reality is open to a free and dispassionate judgment. We need not follow the conventional interpretation of the teachings of *Upaniṣads*, just because their interpretation in accordance with this particular line of thinking has been popularised. We need not take it for granted that there can be no other interpretation. It is not also plausible to think that, just because the majority of writers hold a particular view about the *Upaniṣads*, it must be regarded as an authentic interpretation. Contradictions and inconsistencies might have been uncritically and complacently accepted.

In this connection it may be added that the attention of many scholars has not been drawn to such texts and passages of the *Upaniṣads* as represent the Ultimate Reality as self-manifesting and self-differentiating in Its essence and character. There are clear and unambiguous suggestions of the conception of the Ultimate Reality as a self-differentiating will. Now, if the notions of self-conscious intelligence and will constitute the essence of personality, then we cannot accept such interpretations of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* as advocate monism and pantheism. I have come to the conclusion that the philosophy of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* does not teach the type of idealism which leaves no room for the personality of the individual self and the reality of the world. The *Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa* of this *Upaniṣad* (III. 7) lays supreme emphasis on the ontological difference of God from both the individual self and the world. It also concentrates attention on both intelligence and will as the characteristic features of the nature of God. *Brahman* has been mentioned in the passage in question as the controlling principle of both Nature and history. It has been clearly stated that *Brahman*, dwelling within Nature and history,

is different from both, because He controls them from within. The *Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa* predicates both transcendence and immanence of *Brahman* which proves that, unless God is different from Nature and history and, in consequence, transcends them, He cannot be their controlling principle or power. Transcendence and immanence are intelligible only by reference to the forms of being which are different from one another. They cannot be understood by reference to the same principle indicating only its higher and lower states. Hence the view of Professor Hirianna does not seem to be warranted by the text of the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. I have also invited attention to many other passages of this *Upaniṣad* which can be interpreted theistically.

Thus there is a strong case for looking at all the *Upaniṣads* in a fresh light, however unfashionable the interpretation I have put on them may appear to be. They need to be examined, after taking into consideration all the principles involved in the theistic view of reality. The *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, any more than others, does not seem to contradict the fundamental principles of theism. I leave it to the circumspect and candid judgement of the careful reader to see for himself if the weight of the *Upaniṣads*, without any division of them into the early and the later, points to a supposed transition of thought from monism to theism, on a purely impersonalistic or a personalistic view of reality. They do not seem to contradict the teachings of the Semitic religions in which the personality of both God and the individual self and the reality of the world are fundamental.

In the present treatment of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* I have not allowed my judgement to be influenced by traditional commentators. It is necessary that the texts be allowed to speak for themselves. When this is done, it is not difficult to extract from them a systematic and consistent conception of Ultimate Reality and Its relation with the individual self and the world

which answers all kindred questions and problems that are elaborately dealt with in the different schools of *Vedānta*. I have made reference to some of the modern studies of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* which support the atheistic view of the Ultimate Reality as being outlined in them.

The *Bhagavadgītā* differs from the *Upaniṣads* not so much in inaugurating an utterly new line of thinking as in laying stress on certain elements of the religious consciousness which have not received the attention of the seers of the *Upaniṣads*. It would certainly be a gross error to hold that the *Upaniṣads* are predominantly intellectualistic, on the presumption that they acknowledge a theoretical understanding of the nature of God as being by itself adequate for the attainment of the supreme end of human life. The *Upaniṣads* indeed emphasise in no uncertain terms the involvement of the whole personality in the knowledge of God. They do not commit the error of divorcing knowledge from feeling and action, nor do they exclude the theoretical interest of man from the emotional and the practical, a view which has been much canvassed. The concept of the Self as pure consciousness does not seem to be warranted by the texts of the *Upaniṣads*. The notions of the transcendental and empirical aspects of the individual self are rather products of later development. It is true that the *Upaniṣads* distinguish the purity, immutability and self-sufficiency of the individual self from its functions in the mental life of man. But this does not support the view that the self as the organising principle of all its functions is itself not conscious of the functions it performs. To hold that the organisation of the experience is different from the consciousness of organisation is puerile.

The *Upaniṣadic* view of the Self may not be as highly sophisticated as that of a Kant or a Śāṅkara who maintains the position that the Self as the active principle behind the organisation of experience is cut off from experience itself. In that case experience would not have any value. To hold that

the subject knows without knowing itself is not in keeping with the direct evidence of experience itself. In that case, experience would not have any value. The view I have taken of the individual self as adumbrated in the *Upaniṣads* throws immense light on the ontological difference of the individual self and God and on personality as an essential characteristic of them.

So far as the question of the acknowledgment of the three principles of God, the individual self and the world is concerned, the *Gītā* leaves no room for any doubt as to the conceptions distinctly formulated in it. The teachings of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā* in this way provide an intelligible account of the reality of these three principles and advance answers to all the problems of human existence in a manner that corroborates the philosophical and religious point of view advanced by Śrī Rāmānujācārya.

The question of the continuity of the *Upaniṣads* with the *Brahma Sūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā* has been hotly debated. The conventional interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* is supposed to be in favour of pantheistic monism. In plain language, pantheistic monism is the doctrine of the abstract identity of *Brahman* as impersonal existence exclusive of the reality of the world and the finite individual. The *Brahma Sūtras*, which are traditionally supposed to be a digest of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, have been taken by the majority of modern scholars to lead in the direction of theism rather than in that of monism. The paradoxical claim often put forward by competent scholars is to the effect that while the *Upaniṣads* support monism, the *Vedānta Sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa endorse theism. George Thibaut holds the view that while the *Brahma Sūtras* support Rāmānuja, the *Upaniṣads* are mainly monistic in their orientation. But this is not the view acknowledged to be correct by traditional teachers of *Vedānta*. Whether the *Brahma Sūtras* and the *Upaniṣads* be in favour of the doctrine of Śaṅkara or of Rāmānuja, they have to be taken to be continuous with each other. The

Brahma Sūtras were the result of an attempt to systematise the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* and to extract from them one consistent and systematic doctrine of Ultimate Reality, its relation with the world and the individual self and the means to be adopted for the attainment of God. There is no reason why the *Upaniṣads* be held to teach atheistic monism when there are texts in abundance stressing the personality of God and the reality of the world and the individual self. If the verdict of the author of the *Brahma Sūtras* is in favour of a theistic view of reality which is clearly evident in the teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, then it is certainly too presumptuous to claim that there is any incongruity between the two. That the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* are by no means amenable to the monistic interpretation should be clear to the careful reader.

Therefore, these three fundamental texts of *Vedānta*, namely, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma Sūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, have to be taken to be nearer to theism than to atheistic monism. In the foregoing pages I have made an attempt to put forward a systematic and connected view of the religious interpretation of reality as adumbrated in them. On account of a strikingly new line of approach to the *prasthāna-trayi* having been adopted, the author is liable to be charged with unreasonableness. But a system of beliefs and all such doctrines as support them, cannot be regarded as true or correct simply because they have been maintained by a group of scholars or even by tradition. Scriptures are always open to varied interpretations in accordance with the changing needs of the different periods. Religious insight is the summed up product of all this experience and it is impossible for it not to have answers to all problems that may arise in the life of man. Scriptures, therefore, which embody the religious insight of man, must have a meaning that is many-sided and is not confined to a particular age or clime. This is true of all the scriptures of all religions.

The adaptability of scripture to the new demands that are made upon religious insights advocated in it, calls for the scrutiny and assessment of alternative standpoints with a view to focussing attention upon the doctrine which is the most comprehensive and is capable of answering all our needs. This does not mean that the value of the content of the scripture can be judged solely in terms of social utility, for the religious insight enshrined in it contains a core or essence which, while being imperishable and permanent and capable of solving our social problems, also meets the need of our moral and spiritual life. The three foundational scriptures of *Vedānta*, the *prasthāna-trayī*, we have seen, lend support to theism as the only consistent and tolerant religious metaphysic commensurate with all the requirements of moral and spiritual and also social experience. Their teachings are not mutually contradictory but serve to clinch the theistic view of reality. The monistic interpretation of the *prasthāna-trayī* with its emphasis on a purely impersonalistic and acosmic view of human existence must have been felt to be a matter of imperious necessity at a time when the ideals of human conduct were no better than that of a sort of refined hedonism or pragmatic utilitarianism.

Man is usually so deeply entrenched in the physical values that it is difficult to wean him away from the course of life that is unable to look beyond the frontiers of his physical existence and the joys of the senses. The monistic interpretation dominant in India for several centuries, was an attempt to tackle this problem, and there is no doubt that it squarely met the moral and spiritual needs of the people at that time. The acosmic and monistic interpretation as the essence and substance of the religious outlook in life serves to combat hedonism. For the ideals of human conduct presuppose to a certain extent exactly those very truths which monism and acosmism accentuate. Hedonism, whether refined or gross, whether mundane or transmundane, is the very antithesis of the ideal of perfection.

and goodness, and the contribution of monism and the ethical idealism of Buddhism is certainly of no mean order in the attempts to purify morality of all external or utilitarian considerations.

But even abstract monism cannot be accepted as the final view of human existence and an adequate conception of the Ultimate Reality. The first stage of reaction against the finality of physical existence and of the movement of thought for the formation of the idea of the Infinite is negative. The conception of the Infinite that we form at this stage is found to be negative, for the Infinite is supposed to be the very antithesis of the finite. We reach the Infinite by stripping it of everything finite. The Infinite is affirmed by negating the finite. Another result is what has been called in Indian philosophy *niṣprapañcavāda*, acosmism. But the Infinite that is the negation of the finite is the false Infinite, or rather, one finite entity among many other finite entities.

The attitude of looking at the world and forming a conception of the Infinite by rejecting all the values of the former is found in the course of the development of the religious interpretation of reality to lead, forced by the very logic of the complex situation, to the origination of a more positive and affirmative and, therefore, a more adequate view of reality than is the case with the standpoint that it seeks to transcend and outgrow. The negative attitude itself turns out to be the outcome of the limitation of our understanding. The external view of looking at the world and the finite order is now replaced by an internal view. It is a search into the discovery of the inner meaning of the universe. Nature and history are found to be the revelation and expression, rather than the obscuration of the glory and majesty of God. If the term, 'Absolute' or 'God,' can have any meaning for us and for the religious interpretation of reality, then the self of man and the world must bear witness to the presence of the Deity in

them. The distinction of the Deity from Nature and history is not incompatible with Its immanence in them. It is this final view of the Ultimate Reality and of the nature of the world and the finite self that seems to have been advocated by a long line of *Vedāntic* teachers who rebelled against the monistic and acosmic interpretations of the *prasthāna-trayī*. This is a phenomenon of capital importance, as only this line of thinking can vindicate the values of personal freedom and the sanctity of the individual and the democratic norms of political behaviour.

Philosophy and religion are different, not in respect of the object that they seek to investigate, but rather as regards the methods they adopt for the knowledge of it. They are concerned, unlike the secular commonsense point of view of things, is with the nature of ultimate unity. But, whereas the objective of philosophy is to present an indirect and mediated apprehension of it, religion is a process of direct confrontation with reality, and it is only in the total involvement of the personality of man in the apprehension of the Ultimate Reality that religion can be said to complete and fulfil itself. Reality, however, is the same both for philosophy and religion, because in both that which is taken to satisfy all the demands of the intellectual, emotional and practical demands of our spiritual life is the same, whether it is designated the Absolute as in the former or God as in the latter. There is therefore no justification for holding any difference between the Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion.

The Absolute of philosophy cannot be infinite and perfect without answering the emotional and practical demands of man's spiritual life. The tendency to withdraw the Absolute from the world and to emphasise its ultimacy and perfection by stripping it of all finite determinations, virtually amounts to reducing it to the unknowable of Herbert Spencer. The Absolute is the designation given rather to that aspect of it which emphasises its inwardness and privacy of being. But this by no

means suggests that its involvement in the temporal scene is no part of its character and essence and that by conceiving of it in terms of its relations with the world we denigrate or devalue it with the consequence that religion can at best rest content with only a finite God.

It is, as a matter of fact, of God that the monist is always talking. His mistake is that while he cannot think of the Absolute without incorporating into its conception all that constitutes the content of God, he is anxious to hide his prejudice against the God of religion only by clutching upon a different name. The Absolutist cannot avoid speaking of the Absolute without recourse to the language of theism and yet he presses the point that one cannot have anything as the object of adoration, worship and surrender, except what is known as finite God. This has resulted in the doctrine of finite God propounded in the philosophical systems of Saṅkara, Bhaskara and Yādvaprakāśa.

Religion is supposed to be involved in a paradox, for if it requires nothing short of the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute Reality to which worship and adoration can be addressed, these relations in their turn presuppose personality which means another by which the Absolute is confronted so that it ceases to be Infinite. If, therefore, religion means the relationship of adoration, devotion and surrender, and if these can be conceived only when there is a real self inhabiting a real world, then religion refers to a need that cannot be fulfilled. That which is the ultimate principle, the all-inclusive whole, the Absolute, cannot be endowed with personality, because personality is limitation; whereas all that religion means constitutes the content of personality and is possible only if personality is real and can be assigned to the Absolute.

The capital mistake that monism makes is that of reducing the status of God by subjecting *Brahman* to *avidyā* or *ajñāna* or

māyā through which It comes to appropriate to Itself the attributes or qualifications of omniscience, omnipotence etc. The attributes or perfections of God are known to us as those absolute values which we have no reason to reject as products of our anthropomorphic thinking. For they are no less real than the world of objective facts, and if at all we can think of the Absolute it is only in terms of these ideals or values. To treat the Absolute as impersonal amounts to the acknowledgment that the Highest Reality is relevant to those ideals of life which commend the greatest unquestioned authority and the highest rank in the scheme of things. Even if *māyā* or *ajñāna* be unreal, to be subject to an unreal limitation brings to the Absolute a kind of imperfection that is no less invidious and derogatory than the imperfections and frailties that are the inevitable outcome of the finitude characteristic of the finite self. The Absolute becomes the finite individual and consequently suffers untold miseries and sufferings brought about by Its *jīva*-hood.

The Absolute of monism consequently cannot satisfy religious needs and cannot be adequate to the requirements of the religious consciousness. If there is any ground for holding the view that the religious consciousness is a genuine and authentic revelation of the nature of the Ultimate Reality, then since the conception of the Infinite formed by monism does not square with it, we cannot take it to be the expression of the final truth.

We meet with another conception of finite God in the *Vedānta* of Bhāskara for whom the *upādhi* which limits *Brahman* is real. This teaching is more dangerous than even the doctrine of *Advaita*, for the suffering of *Brahman* is no less real than that of the finite individual. Hence there is no possibility of an adequate view of God in Bhāskara's school of *Vedānta*.

The status of God in Yādavaprakāśa is even more revolting to the religious consciousness, as he makes no attempt to

preserve or safeguard God's transcendent perfection. God is completely immersed in the unending process of time and change. Causation is real change, and since *Brahman* Himself evolves into the world and the finite selves, we have no *Brahman* separate or different from the finite individuals and the world of changing phenomena and events. There is, consequently, no room for God, in point of fact, in the school of *Yādavaprakāśa*. A growing God who does not transcend time but is rather subject to it and is so inextricably involved in it that He cannot secure His freedom from time and history, is no better than the finite *jīva* and falls inevitably a victim to all the evils which characterise the career of the individual self. We cannot understand the nature of God without understanding also His relations with time. Time is real, yet time cannot supersede God and it cannot be ultimately real. It is a feature of facts in the world, but it cannot contain God. But *Yādavaprakāśa* makes God a creature of time. We designate as God that principle of unity and self-consciousness at the root and centre of all things from which they come: which means that even though time is included in Him, He transcends time, because it is He that determines what the course of time must be and in what direction it must move. God cannot be perfect because He will be progressing along the time line like us and He also will have unfulfilled hopes and aspirations, because it is in the very nature of creatures to pine for what has not been attained by them. It is self-contradictory to think of God as living in the time-series and of His life being dribbled out every moment like ours. Progress can be a feature of the finite things in the whole, but it cannot be attributed to the whole itself which is not a process. Change can be a feature of reality, but change itself cannot be reality. God must really be an unmoved mover. *Yādava's* God has no personality, no self-contained existence and reality. If God Himself is involved in the process, He cannot Himself be its source. *Yādava's* God can never be at peace with Himself, as He cannot enjoy that quiet and rest

which are implied in His withdrawal from creative activity which, though an expression of His being, does not as a matter of fact constitute it. Rest and movement are both essential, because both are complementary.

The sole object of the thinking of Rāmānuja was to establish that God is Absolute because only as Absolute can God be perfect and the absolute value. He is acutely critical of the conceptions of God in Śaṅkara, Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa. I have tried, in the course of these lectures, to the utmost of my ability, to establish that the interests of philosophy and religion cannot be divided. Rāmānuja's theism is the best systematic and consistent demonstration of the truths of theism. If the test of a true philosophy and religion be harmony, proportion and balance, then the teachings of Rāmānuja have a claim to greater attention than has been paid to them. There are still many other dimensions of his philosophy which, because of the demands of time and other considerations, I have not been able to deal with. I hope I shall be able to deal with the remaining problems and issues concerning his ethics and religious psychology in a complementary volumes.

Suffice it to say now in conclusion that in Viśiṣṭādvaita the world is a moral order. Nature, with its irreversible chain of the causal nexus, is the environment or, we might better say, a medium for the realisation of ethical values; and therefore, its operations, one and all, are in strict conformity with the moral deserts of the finite selves. It is the environment which the finite selves mould by their own will. While on the one hand Viśiṣṭādvaita seems to emphasise the continuity and unity of man with Nature, on the other hand it is no less emphatic on the freedom and independence of man. Freedom consists not in man's severance from Nature, but in the exercise of his lordly control over it. For Rāmānuja, matter is subject to changes occasioned in it by the actions of selves. All changes in Nature are thus purposive. Now this perpetual subjection of

Nature to changes caused by the actions of the *jīvas* prepares the field for the enjoyment of the fruits of actions they have done. Nature is an aid and an occasion for man to achieve perfection. A world of freely choosing individuals, who voluntarily lay themselves open to frustrations and disappointments and adapt the objects to their ends and ideals, is preferable to one in which life goes on smoothly without any obstacle or hindrance in the way and in which there is no ordeal to bring out our sterling qualities. This, once again, affords us a clue to the theistic interpretation of the universe as a whole, and such an attitude towards the universe confirms the view that it is marching ahead for the realisation of the Divine plan and purpose and that it has no meaning apart from God. As it is through the world that God's purposes are realised, it may be regarded as an expression, in a very important sense, of the Divine character. This world acquires a significance and a value which reminds us of Goethe's pregnant declaration in *Faust* that it is the outward garment of God and that it is a sacrament.

This Viśiṣṭādvaita attitude to the universe is a reply to the charge that in Hinduism material values do not find a worthy place. Rāmānuja's religious world view disallows the validity of such perfunctory and careless indictments of Hinduism. For Rāmānuja, the world is never without God. He says that it cannot be hostile to God's glory or purposes. He rejects the view that the world is essentially evil and that the highest good of human life consists in a flight from the affairs and obligations of the world and in an exclusive devotion to and contemplation of God. Any unbridgeable chasm between the two spheres of spirituality and worldliness, carries no meaning for Rāmānuja. For it is through the world that the finite soul secures the most suitable chance for its fellowship with the Supreme.

N

Naciketas : and Yama, 329.

Nivṛitti : ideal probably imported from outside, 374 ; *karma-yoga* contrasted with, 377-83 ; pre-suppositions of, 375-77.

P

Personality : of the individual self, 337-339 ; of God, 334-337 ; the problem of, 213-239.

Philosophy : and religion, 1 ; and science, 3 ; can satisfy the desire for understanding unity, 5 ; cannot but be all-comprehensive, 32 ; cannot supersede religion, 43-46 ; does not originate religion, 525 ; duty to burst through the abstractions of science and relate them to concrete human experience, 33 ; educates men in religion and values, 61-66 ; experience and awareness of things made clearer by, 14 ; enquiry indispensable, 37 ; formal or interpretative understanding and evaluation, 53-62 ; God, awareness of, made conscious, 527-28 ; method of, different from that of religion, 63 ; persistent efforts at knowledge to disperse doubt, 50 ; reasoning in, 44 ; reasoning creates and resolves doubts, 49 ; pluralistic tendencies in contemporary philosophy, 16-19 ; organic unity in contemporary science, 19-25 ; rationalisation of experience, 11 ; subject of, not an absolutely *apriori* method of knowing things, 64 ; subject not God but a concept of the idea of God, 63 ; thinking things together, 11, 75 ; ultimate attitude adopted, 23.

Prakṛti : dynamism of, 403-408 ; reason and, 400-401.

Praśna Upaniṣad : *Brahman*, primacy and ultimacy of, 336 ; individual self becomes omniscient, 338 ; not an abstract principle or pure consciousness, but a subject, 337 ; personality of, 337-339 ; God, personality of, 334-337 ; *Pañcadaśī* on the six questions, 334 ; *Prajāpati* as the lord of creation, 335 ; simile of the spokes in the wheel, 338 ; sets out the religious view of reality and the relationship between God and man.

R

- Ramānuja** : *passim* ; misconception about the theology of, 522.
- Reality** : of the transcendent principle in all knowledge, 56-61 ; nature of, 261-66, 277-85.
- Reason** : abstracted from life leads to agnosticism, 526 ; helpful in making faith philosophical, 525.
- Relation** : concept of, 225-32 ; identity, 232-247 ; nature of 261-66, 277-88.
- Religion** : and mystery, 73 ; as belief in the existence of God, 75, 78, 91 ; belief and will, 108 ; common element in, 79-82 ; conscious relation to a Supreme Centre, 86 ; definition of, 76, 111-114 ; double-edged sword, 34 ; experience of God in, 95 ; emotion and feeling dominant in, no less important than reason, 105 ; feeling in, and thought, 107 ; feeling in, and will, 106 ; foundation in the ultimate, 39 ; God's difference from man in, 534 ; identified with mysticism, 45 ; intuitive and practical, 43 ; involves the direct relation of man to God, 50 ; is exclusively a matter of faith, 50 ; is the most complex of experiences, 41 ; I-thou relationship in, 99 ; knowledge in, different from scientific knowledge, 98 ; knowledge in, is personal, 103 ; law of development in, 528 ; morality its sole content, 530 ; philosophy of, 55 ; points to something both inside and outside man, 532 ; purified by doubt, 49 ; reason and, 100-101 ; rituals and sacrifices, 102 ; springs from self-consciousness, 42 ; theism in its perfect form, 82.
- Religious experience** : consciousness, practical activity and feeling, 102-105 ; necessity of philosophical scrutiny of, 34-40 ; place and value of, in human knowledge, 31-34 ; thought in, 109-111.

S

- Sāmānādhikarānya** : as the logic of predication, 220-225.
- Saṅkarācārya** : *Advaita* and Buddhism, 371 ; *Advaita* and *Sāṅkhya*, 374-379 ; charge of being a crypto-Buddhist, 370 ; contrasted with Bhāskara and Yādavaprakāśa on the status

of God, 452-517; on the intention of scripture not to demonstrate God, 72; Vedānta before him, 455-460.

Science: and beliefs in miracles, 47; contrasted with philosophy, 12; different as knowledge from philosophy and religion, 5; dispelled dogma, ignorance and superstition, 46; gives an incomplete account of experience, 27-28; inadequacy of, 24; murders to dissect, 3; seeks unity like philosophy, poetry and religion, 6.

Secularism: meaning of, 70; name given by Holyoake, 69.

Svābhāvika-bhedābheda: of Yādavaprakāśa, 346.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad: a distinctive contribution to theism, 345; differentiates God from the individual self and matter, 340-349; doctrine of personal God in, 341; knowledge of God as the means to overcome miseries, 345; often quoted by Rāmānuja, 339; theism of, 339.

Synthesis: of philosophy and religion in India, 520.

T

Tagore: on the physical world 3; man transcends the elements of his character, 4.

Taittiriya Upaniṣad: cosmic principles and levels of reality converge on man, 2; *Vāruṇī Vidyā*, 4.

Theology: its function, 93.

Truth: nature of, 4.

U

Upaniṣads: *Aitareya*, 313; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 296-312; *Brahman* as personal and ethical will, 392; gifts his fecundity to all beings, 73; *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, and, 85, *Chāndogya*, 273-296; difference of God and man, 288-290; God as inmost reality, 72; God, nature of, 301-307; God, Nature and man, 339-344; God's relation to the finite self, 341-345; God's relation to the world, 296-301; *Isāvārya Upaniṣad*, 317; *Mahānārāyaṇa*, 312, 318, 319; *Muṇḍaka* 320-334; mystic experience, 307-308; mystic fulfilment, 385-388; pantheistic interpretation of, 353-356; post-Sankarite theistic interpretation, 256-261; *Praśna*, 334-339;

realism in, 372; reconstruction of religious thought in 349-60; *Taittirīya*, 2, 4; *tattvamasi*, 290-296; theism in the later, 312-320; theistic emphasis in Radhakrishnan's interpretation, 262-273; *Subāla*: 312, 318, 319, *S'vetaśvatara*, 312, 318, 319, 339-345; ultimate reality, 277-285; Viśiṣṭādvaita idea of God in 248-360.

Unity: in analytic and synthetic methods, 3-8; of authority, reason and experience, 248-253; of forms of knowledge 1-3; of the nature of the highest reality, 183-192.

V

Value: and existence, 207-212.

Vedānta: morality and religion in, 487-497; purpose of, in Bhāskara, Yādavaprakāśa, Saṅkara, and Rāmānuja, 479-82; theistic orientation of, 497-502.

Viśiṣṭādvaita: and natural theology, 120-123; as a philosophy of affirmation and proportion, 161-172; *Bhagavadgītā* and, 361-451; designation of, 542-543; from finite mind to God, 136-150; from the Infinite Mind to finite mind, 150-164; God in *Upaniṣads* as viewed by, 248-360; idea of God in, 173-247; man and world inseparable, 542; matter and mind in, 123-136; Nature and history with their significance in, 119; subject and object in, 123-136.

W

West: God as understood in, and the East, 544; Hinduism and the, 502-517; intimate bond of kinship between the East and the, 541; mutual understanding of the East and the, 539-540; Western influence on Hindu culture, 520.

Will: and belief, 108-109.

Whitehead: on religion, 531.

Y

Yādavaprakāśa: *Bhedābheda* of, 477-482.

Yājñavalkya: and Gārgī, 302; and Maitreyī, 299-300.

Index of Sanskrit Works Quoted

(r = referred to. t. q. = English translation quoted.)

Aitareya Upaniṣad: I. 1. 1. 262.

Bhagavadgītā: Colophon. 395; II. 12. (r). 418, 481;
 II. 49. 379; II. 50. 444; II. 64 (t. q.). 411; III. 4 (r). 440;
 III. 20 (r). 435; III. 33 (r). 430; IV. 1, 2 (r) 374; IV. 15
 (r). 347; IV. 38. 379; V. 5. 390; V 37. 379;
 VI. 5 (r). 409; VI. 22 (t. q.). 147; VI. 46 (r). 439;
 VII. 4-6 (r). 171; VII. 7. (r). 420; VII. 18 379;
 VII. 29-30 (r). 438; VIII. 3 (r). 451; VIII. 3. 418;
 IX. 1. 438; IX. 10. 420; IX. 10 (r). 426; IX. 22 (r). 433;
 IX. 30 (r). 432; X. 11 (r). 432-3; X. 42 (r). 427; XIII. 3 (r).
 463, 552; XIII. 7-11 (r). 436; XIII. 21 (r). 408; XIII. 21,
 23 (r). 430; XIII. 31. 447; XIII. 31 (r). 406; XIV. 27 (r).
 416; XV. 7, 10 (r). 449; XV. 16-18 (t. q.) 170; XVIII. 12
 (r). 407; XVIII. 14 (r). 408; XVIII. 14-5 (r). 421;
 XVIII. 16 (r). 406; XVIII. 20 (r). 437; XVIII. 63 (r) 428-9.

Bhagavadgītā: Ānandagiri's commentary on: VIII 3, 451.
 Radhakrishnan on: 253; Rāmānuja's commentary on:
 II. 12. 418; XVIII. 12. 407; XVIII. 14-5 (t.q). 421;
 Sankara's commentary on: IV. 15. 369; XIII. 3. 463;
 XIII. 3 (r). 552; XIII. 31. 406; XVIII. 16. 406; Vedānta
 Deśika's *Tātparyacandrikā* on: II. 12. 481.

Bhāva-prakāśikā: (r), 467.

Brahma-sūtras: I. 1. 4 (r). 72; I. 2. 20 (r). 305; I. 2. 28 (r).
 305; I. 3. 19 (r). 457; I. 3. 31 (r). 576; II. 1. 1 (r). 370;
 II. 1. 2 (r). 49; II. 1. 14 (r). 462-3; II. 1. 14, 22 (r). 368;
 II. 1. 21 (r). 469; II. 3. 29. 264; III. 2. 40 (r). 514;
 III. 4. 2, 18, 40 (r). 516; IV. 3. 12 (r). 516; IV. 3. 14 (r).
 462; IV. 4. 5, 11 (r). 516.

Brahma-sūtras: Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya* on: see under *Śrībhāṣya*;
 Sankara's commentary on: I. 1. 4. 72; I. 2. 20. 305;
 I. 3. 19. 457; II. 1. 1 (t. q.). 370; II. 1. 2. 49; II. 1. 14.
 462-3; II. 1. 14, 22. 368; IV. 3. 14. 462.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: I. 4. 3 (t. q.) 262; I. 4. 7. 318; I. 4. 7 (t. q.) 318; I. 4. 10 (r.) 218; I. 4. 10. 359; I. 6. 3 (t. q.) 300; II. 1. 20 (r.) 252; II. 1. 20 (t. q.) 300; II. 5. 15. 311; II. 5. 15 (t. q.) 300; II. 5. 18. 322; III. 7 (r.) 305, 554-5; III. 7. 1. 311; III. 7. 15. 20 (t. q.) 158; III. 9. 10 (t. q.) 303; III. 9. 28 (t. q.) 303; IV. 2. 4 (t. q.) 300; IV. 3. 7. 31 (t. q.) 300; IV. 3. 33. 302; IV. 3. 33 (t. q.) 302; IV. 3. 32 (r.) 253; IV. 4. 5 (t. q.) 303; IV. 4. 7 (r.) 300; IV. 4. 19 (t. q.) 300; IV. 4. 22 (t. q.) 304; IV. 4. 23 (r.) 304; IV. 4. 25 (r.) 153; V. 6. 1 (r.) 44; VI. 2. 24-30 (r.) 227.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Sankara's commentary on: I. 4. 10. 218, 369; II. 1. 20. 252; V. 6. 1. 44; VI. 2. 24-30. 222.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad: III. 14. 1. 281; III. 14. 1 (r.) 285; V. 1. 1. 310; VI. 2. 1. 262; VI. 2. 1 (t. q.) 262; VI. 2. 2. 277; VI. 2. 3. 262, 278; VI. 2. 3 (t. q.) 262; VI. 8. 6. 281; VI. 8. 7. 291; VI. 8. 7 (t. q.) 291; VI. 14. 3. 291; VI. 14. 3 (t. q.) 291; VII. 24. 1. 284; VII. 24. 1 (t. q.) 286; VII. 26. 2. 272; VIII. 1. 5 (r.) 352; VIII. 3. 2 (t. q.) 191; VIII. 10. 2 (r.) 290; VIII. 12. 3. 282, 289; VIII. 12. 4. 358;

Iśa Upaniṣad: 8 (r.) 352.

Kaṭhōpaniṣad: I. 2. 12. 72; II. 20-22 (r.) 331; IV. 11. 12 (r.) 332; IV. 15 (r.) 332; V. 9-15 (r.) 333.

Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad: (r.) 317.

Mahābhārata: I. 1. 64 (t. q.) 249; XII. 308. 7, 17 (r.) 516; XII. 348. 5-8. 361.

Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad: (r.) III. 204.

Mīmāṃsā Sūtras: I. 1. 5 (r.) 516; V. 2. 19 (r.) 516; VI. 1. 8 (r.) 516; X. 8. 44 (r.) 510; XI. 1. 64 (r.) 516.

Mīmāṃsā Sūtras: Śābara's Commentary on: XI. 1. 64. 516.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad: I. 1. 1. 319; I. 1. 6. 322; I. 1. 7 (r.) 324; I. 1. 9 (r.) 325; I. 2. 3. 6 (t. q.) 321; I. 2. 7 (t. q.) 322; I. 2. 13. 266; II. 1. 2. 323; II. 1. 4 (r.) 324; II. 2. 5. 325; II. 2. 6. 326; II. 2. 8 (r.) 147; III. 1. 1 (r.) 326; III. 1. 2-3 (r.) 321; III. 1. 3. 320, 323; III. 2. 1. 326; III. 2. 3 (r.) 326; III. 2. 8. 320, 326; III. 2. 9. 329; III. 2. 9 (r.) 326; III. 2. 9-10. 328.

Nānārtha-valjyanti ; 329.

Praśna Upaniṣad : I. 1. 334 ; I. 3, 4, 15. 335 ; I. 16. (r) 336 ;
II. 1, 3, 6. 336 ; IV. 7 (r). 337 ; IV. 7, 9. 339 ; V. 2 (r)
338 ; V. 5. 337 ; VI. 8. 338.

Satapata Brāhmaṇa : X. 6. 1. 310.

Sāṅkhya Kārikā : 64, 404 ; 17. 407.

Sarvadarśanasamgraha : 415, 465.

Śribhāṣya : I. 1. 1. 133, 159, 164, 166, 182, 237-9, 249 (t.q.) 469 ;
I. 1. 4. 151 ; I. 3. 7. 284 ; II. 1. 21 (t.q.) 469 ; III. 2. 34. 331.

Śrutaprakāśika : on *Śribhāṣya* I. 3. 7 (r). 284.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad : I. 2. 319 ; I. 2, 3, 6. 340 ; I. 9. 342 ;
I. 10. 341 ; III. 3, 4, 13. 342 ; III. 9 (r). 460 ; IV. 17. 343 ;
VI. 4 (r) 341 ; VI. 8, 9, 11. 343 ; VI. 11-13, 15-17. 344 ;
VI. 20 (r) 345.

Taittirīya Aranyaka : III. 12. 7. 251.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad : II. 1. 5. 72 ; II. 6. 177, 263, 271 ;
II. 7. 177, 271, (r). 283 ; II. 8 (r) 301 ; I. 9. 265.

Tātparyacandrikā ; on Rāmānuja's *Gitābhāṣya*, II. 12. 481.

Tattvamuktākālāpa : quoting Saṅkara on *Bṛh. Up.* 467.

Vākyapadiya : (r) 457.

Vedāntadīpa : I. 1. I. 170.

Vedānta-sūtras : same as *Brahma-sūtras*.

Vedārthasaṅgraha : 49, 403 ; (r) 233.

Vijñānabhikṣu's Sāṅkhyasāra : 515.

INDEX OF NAMES

[This Index includes also the names of the authors quoted, but not those of their works.]

A

- Adamson, R 129
Alexander 423
Al Ghazzali 287
Aliotta 156
Ānandagiri 451
Aristotle 138, 157.
Arjuna 361-2, 366, 377-8,
388-9, 391, 400-01, 416, 420,
422, 437.
Asaṅga 258
Āśvaghoṣa 258
Augustine, St. 86, 233, 250.

B

- Bādarāyaṇa 238, 264, 275-6,
294, 457, 459, 516, 539, 558.
Baillie, J 125, 250.
Balfour, Lord 48, 523.
Barth, K 120
Bergson 255-6
Berkeley 66, 126, 238.
Bevan, E 246
Bhandarkar 304
Bhartṛhari (author or *Vākya-
padiya*) 457
Bhartṛprapañca 458, 473.
Bhāskara 346, 349, 458, 460,
473-7, 479, 482, 495, 563-4,
566.
Bhrgu 2
Bodhāyana 122, 458.
Boehme, J 285

- Bonhoeffer 71
Bouquet, A.C. 316
Bradley, F. H 5, 24, 198-9,
210-13, 221-2, 224, 230, 461,
472.
Brahmā 490
Buber, M 533
Buren, P. V 71, 513.
Burt, E. A 9, 103.

C

- Caïrd 13, 32, 131, 133.
Caitanya 245
Carlyle 48, 68.
Chardin, T. E 160-61.
Cicero 31
Cohen 160-61.
Cox 70
Croce 522

D

- Datta, S 394
Dasgupta, Dr. S. N 257, 269,
361, 371-2, 382, 452, 458-9,
481.
Dawson 76-7.
Descartes 26-7, 124-6, 128,
146.
Deśika, Vedānta 137, 203,
259, 264, 342.
Deussen 459
Dramidacārya 122, 458.
Droṇacārya 378
Durgā 519

E

Eliot, Sir Charles 254, 256,
505.

Eliot, T. S. 164

Ewing 230, 505, 511.

F

Falkenberg 126

Fichte 30, 63, 65.

Fraser 66

Frend 74, 100, 533.

G

Galileo 26

Gambhirānanda 321-2

Gārgi 302, 309.

Garrigou-Lagrange 196

Gassendi 180

Gauḍapāda 257-8, 268, 371-2.

Gautama 89

Goethe 567

Gough 372

Guha 122

Guyon 287

H

Harris, E. E. 180

Hegel 29, 31, 64-5, 127, 140,
174, 197, 209, 493, 511.

Hick, J. 425, 445.

Hiriyanna 274-5, 313, 374,
450, 457, 554, 556.

Hobbes 180, 242.

Hocking, W. E. 104, 106, 480.

Holyoake, G. J. 69.

Homer 86

Hugel, F. V. 547

Hume, David 127, 129, 174.

Hume, R. E. 153, 303, 307,
372.

I

Indra 282, 289-90.

Inge, W. R. 207, 212, 285,
423, 501.

Īśvarakṛṣṇa 514, 516.

J

Jacobi 516

Jaimini 253, 516, 539.

James, W. 48, 76, 78, 254,
523, 528

Janamejaya 361

Jāures 35

Jung, C. 532-3.

K

Kaḥ 519

Kant 6, 8, 15, 37, 55-7, 84, 92,
94, 124, 133, 207, 236, 493,
515, 542, 557.

Kapila 508, 514-5.

Kapya 311

Karmarkar, R. D. 159

Kauravas 361

Kṛṣṇa 362, 374, 376-80, 388-91,
395, 408, 417, 430-32, 438,
440, 450, 529.

Kuntī 382

L

Lactantius 76

Leibniz 125

Lewes 54

Lewis, H. D. 307, 314.

Locke, J. 16, 126,

Lotze 104-5, 207, 244, 548.

M
 MacLagan 214
 Madhvācārya 245, 415.
 Mahāvira 90
 Maitreyi 299
 Martineau 155
 Mascal E. L 54
 Max Muller 86, 248, 516-7,
 520, 553.
 Max Scheler 103
 Mill, J. S 48
 Muirhead, J. H 199, 202.

N
 Naciketa 329-30
 Nāgārjuna 269
 Nārada 282-4.
 Nārāyaṇa 471
 Nettleship, R L 285
 Nietzsche 544
 Nimbārka 245

P
 Pāṇdavas 361
Parīśuddha Naiḍyikas 268
Parīśuddha Saugatas 268
 Patañjali 450, 508.
 Paul, St. 149, 257, 409.
 Pennington 212
 Plato 8, 9, 11, 196, 224, 242,
 351, 422, 424, 527.
 Prajāpati 284, 289-90.
 Pratt, J. B 245, 287.
 Pringle-Pattison 473

R
 Radhakrishnan, S 112, 152-3,
 188-9, 205 n, 245, 252-3,
 267-9, 295-6, 346, 361, 370,
 372, 438, 454, 459, 462-3.

Raghavachar, S. S 203
 Rāma 529
 Rāmakrishṇa 255-6.
 Rāmānuja: *passim*
 Rangacharya, M 149, 249.
 Rashdall 255
 Reid, L. A 87, 234-5.
 Rolland, Romain 7
 Royce, J 49, 60-61.
 Rudra 342
 Russell 20, 128, 133, 394.

S
 Śabara 516
 Saher P. J 509
 Sanatkumāra 282-6.
 Śaṅkara: *passim*
 Śāntaraksita 258
 Sartre 9
 Schopenhauer 9
 Schrodinger, E 23
 Servius Honoratus 76
 Sheen, F. J 31
 Sirc(k)ar, M. N 206, 468,
 470-72, 489.
 Siva 342, 519.
 Slater 314
 Smith, H 316
 Spencer, Herbert 48, 53-7,
 562.
 Spinoza 191, 196-7, 215-6
 220-21.
 State, W. T 164
 Śhīramatī 258
 Subrahmanya Iyer, V 501
 Sudarśana Sūri 152, 284.
 Svetaketu 291
 Swanton, J. R 77

T

- Tagore, Rabindranath 3, 4,
242, 510.
Taylor, A. E 8, 209.
Tennant 108-9, 128, 130.
Thibaut, G 558
Tilak(a) 38
Tomlin, G. W. F 507-8.
Toynbee, A. J 89

U

- Urban, W. M 470

V

- Vaisampāyana 361
Vallabha 245
Varuṇa 2, 314.
Vasistha 516
Vasubandhu 258
Vāsudeva 471
Vidyāranya 334

- Vijñāna Bhikṣu 269, 515.
Viṣṇu 342
Vivekānanda 255-6.

W

- Wadia, A. R.^m 501.
Wallace, W 33, 64-5, 131-2.
Warnock, W. J 123
Watson 37
Whitehead 17-8, 20-21, 103,
531.
Wilson, J C 74-5, 230-31.
Windleband 206-7.

Y

- Yādavaprakāśa (Yādava) 346,
349, 458, 460, 473-80, 482,
495, 563-6.
Yājñavalkya 296-303, 306-9.
Yama 329
Yāmunācārya 264.

INDEX OF ENGLISH QUOTATIONS : AUTHORS AND THEIR WORKS

(The index includes also mention of authors where no specific reference to particular works is made).

A

- Acts (Bible)* 190
Adamson, R. 'The Development of Modern Philosophy' 129.
Aliotta, Prof. 'The Idealistic Reaction against Science',
English translation by Agnes McCaskill 156.
Aristotle 138, 527.
Augustine, St. 76, 86, 203, 250.

B

- Baillie, John 'An Invitation to Pilgrimage', 125, 250.
Balfour, Lord 48, 523.
Barth, Karl 120
Bergson 'Two Sources of Morality and Religion', 256
Berkeley 126, 233.
Bevan, Edwyn 'Symbolism and Belief', 246
Bhandarkar 'Collected Works, IV' . 304
Boehme, Jacob 285
Bonhoeffer 71
Bouquet, A.C. 'Hinduism', 316
Bradley, Francis Herbert 5, 221, 224, 227, 230, 461 ;
'Appearance and Reality', 24, 104, 195, 210, 212, 472 ;
'Principles of Logic', 104, 210.
Buber, Martin 'Eclipse of God', 533
Buren, Paul Van 71 ; 'The Secular Meaning of the Gospel':
513
Burt, E. A. 'Types of Religious Philosophy', 59 ; 'In
Search of Philosophic Understanding', 103.

C

- Caird, Edward 'Hegel', 13, 141-2; 'The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant', 131, 133; 'Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers', 32.
- Carlyle 48; 'Sartor Resartus', 68
- Chardin, Teilhard de 'Human Energy', English translation by J. M. Cohen, 160-61.
- Cicero 31
- Cox, Harvey 'The Secular Society', 70
- Croce 522

D

- Dasgupta, Dr. Surendranath 371, 382, 452, 481; 'A History of Indian Philosophy', 257-8, 269, 349, 361, 371-2, 382, 452, 458, 481; 'Indian Idealism', 258, 361, 458.
- Datta, S. 'The Problem of Relation in Contemporary Philosophy', 394
- Dawson, Christopher 'Religion and Culture', 76-7.
- Descartes 124-6; 'Third Meditation', 146
- Deussen 459

E

- Eliot, Sir Charles 'Hinduism and Buddhism', 254, 256, 505.
- Eliot, T. S. 'The Dry Salvages', quoted in W. T. State, 'Time and Eternity', 164.
- Ewing, A. C. 'Idealism: A Critical Survey', 230; 'Non-Linguistic Philosophy', 505, 511.

F

- Falkenberg 'History of Philosophy', 126
- Fichte 'Werke', 30, 63, 65.
- Fraser 'Selections from Berkeley', 66
- Freud 74, 100, 533.

G

- Galileo 26
 Gambhīrānanda, Swāmi 'Eight *Upaniṣads*', 321-2.
 Garrigou-Lagrange 196
 Gassendi 180
 Goethe 'Faust', 567
 Gough 'Philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*', 372
 Guyon 'The Elusive Mind', 287

H

- Hamlet* (Shakespeare) 93
 Harris, Errol E 'Matter, Mind and Modern Science', 180
 Hegel 29, 64, 127, 140, 174, 197, 209, 493, 511; 'Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion', English translation by Spiegs and Sanderson, 31; 'Philosophie des Rechts', 65
 Hocking, W. E. 'The Meaning of God in Human Experience', 104, 106, 480.
 Holyoake, G. J 69
 Homer 86
 Hugel, Baron Friedrich Von 547
 Hume, David 127, 129, 174
 Hume, R. E. 'Thirteen Principal *Upaniṣads*', English translation 158, 303, 307, 372.

I

- Inge, W. R 423; 'God and the Astronomers', 207; 'Mysticism in Religion', 212, 285.
 Inge and others 'Radhakrishnan: Comparative Studies in Philosophy, presented in honour of his sixtieth birthday', 501

J

- Jacobi in 'Journal of American Oriental Society', 516
 James, William 48, 76, 78, 523, 528; 'Pragmatism and Other Essays', 254-5.
 Jaures 35
 Jung, Carl 532-3.

K

- Kant, Immanuel 6, 8, 15, 37, 55-7, 84, 92, 94, 124, 133, 207, 236, 493, 515, 542, 557.
Karmarkar, Professor R. D. '*S'ribhāṣya* of Rāmaṇuja', 158

L

- Lactantius 76
Leibniz 125
Lewes '*History of Philosophy*', 54
Lewis, Professor H. D. '*Morals and Relation*', 307; and Robert Lawson Slater, '*The Study of Religions*', 314
Locke, John 16, 126, 129.
Lotze 244; quoted in '*Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*', 548; quoted in '*God and the Astronomers*', 207; '*The Philosophy of Lotze*', 104-5.

M

- MacLagan, W. G. '*The Theological Frontier of Ethics*', 214
Martineau '*A Study of Religion*', 155
Mascall, E. L. '*He Who Is*', 255
Max Muller '*Anthropological Religion*', 86; '*Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*', 248, 516-7, 520; '*Three Lectures on Vedānta*', 553
Max Scheler 103
Mill, John Stuart 48
Muirhead, J. H. '*Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy*', 199, 202.

N

- Nettleship, R. L. 285
Nietzsche 544

P

- Paul, St. '*Epistle to Galatians*', 149, 287, 409.
Pennington the Quaker 212
Plato 8, 9, 224, 242, 351, 422, 424, 527; '*Republic*'. 11; '*Sophist*', 196
Pratt, J. B. '*The Religious Consciousness*', 245, 287.
Pringle-Pattison '*Idea of God*', 473
Psalms (Bible) 91, 196.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Index of Quotations from Sanskrit works and that of works in English indicate the bibliographical material used. Details not given in the footnotes are given here.

SANSKRIT WORKS

The *Brahma-sūtras* with the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya and the sub-commentaries of *Bhāmati*, *Kalpataru* and *Parimalā*, edited by Pandit Anantakṛṣṇa Śāstri was published by the Nirnaya Sagara Press, Bombay in 1938. Rāmānujācārya's works are available in many editions. The quotations are taken largely from the edition of the *Sribhāṣya*, *Vedāntasāra* and *Vedāntadīpa* in two volumes by R. Venkatesvara & Co., Madras (1936). The *Sribhāṣya* with *Srutaprakāśikā*, *Bhāvaprakāśikā* and *Tattvaṭīkā* was brought out in six volumes at Srinivasa Press, Vrindavana, 1916. Recently, the *Sribhāṣya* with the *Srutaprakāśikā* has been brought out in two volumes at Madras (1968). The *Gītābhāṣya* of Śrī Rāmānuja with the *Tātparyacandrikā* of Vedāntadeśika was published by R. Venkatesvara & Co., Sri P. B. Aṅṅangarācārya of Kanchipuram and others. It is also found in the *Bhagavadgītā* with the eleven commentaries edited by Gajānana Sarma which include those of Śaṅkarācārya, Madhvācārya, Vallabhācārya and others. The *Vedārthasaṅgraha* with the *Tātparyadīpikā* was published by Pandit Rama Misra Śāstri of Benares long ago. A later edition was brought out by Tirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam. The *Gadyatraya* is available in many editions with Sanskrit and Tamil commentaries.

The *Dharmakośa*, *Upaniṣatkāṇḍa*, Parts I & II, edited by Lakṣmaṇa Śāstri J. Śrī, Wai (Satara), Prajña Pāthasāla Mandala, 1949-50, contains the texts of all the *Upaniṣads* with the commentaries of various Schools of *Vedānta*.

WORKS IN ENGLISH

In regard to the following books, the footnotes have not given full particulars. They are furnished below:

Bergson 'The Two Sources of Morality and Religion', Doubleday & Co., New York, 1935

Bevan 'Symbolism and Belief', Allen & Unwin, London, 1935.

Bhandarkar 'Collected Works', Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1929

Bouquet 'Hinduism', Hutchinson's Library, London, 1949.

Bradley, F. H. 'Principles of Logic', 2 vols., Oxford University Press, 1967

Buber 'Eclipse of God', Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1965

ERRATA

The more important printing mistakes are given below :

Page	Line	For	Read
18	34 (n.)	<i>Merdern</i>	<i>Modern</i>
36	15	does nut	does not
	16	terresterial	terrestrial
	23	hunma life	human life
42	26	origion	origin
47	20	ttuths	truths
50	11	it he	it be
67	15	Kisna	Kṛṣṇa
70	4	analssis	analysis
83	10	be can	can be
96	36	Religion its	Religion in its
97	1	attainment a	attainment of a
122	21	scriptual	scriptural
130	34	<i>Noture, Mind</i>	<i>Nature, Man</i>
162	18	unmanifest from	unmanifest form
171	13	as well tre	as well as the
186	9	nas been	has been
	34	velations	revelations
219	25	persently	presently
227	7	ations	cations
249	19	thinks	thinkers
254	29	<i>Hinduism an</i>	<i>Hinduism and</i>
258	17	treat it	takes it
267		Page no. given wrongly as	762
310	24	all them of	all of them
315	3	monotheis	monotheism
329		After line 20 insert	'X. <i>Katha Upanisad</i> '.
359	7	to thinking	to be thinking
386	11	illegitarate	illegitimate
405	34	emphasises	emphasise
406		Page no wrongly given as	405
410	30	in spite	in spite of
431	21	this sense it.	this sense.
444	20	the same	of the same
468	35	originastion	organisation
512	21	with them	with by them
526	25	men's	man's
543	23	different on	different from
547	17	fulctons	functions
555	4	paradigimatic	paradigmatic
558	35	taken be	taken to be
560	16	clinch	clinch
566	21	volumes	volume